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No. 112.

THE BIRTH OF THE BABE SPRING.

BY MALCOLM TAYLOR, JR.

"Near northward Sol—send now thy smile
Down kindly on the patient Earth;
And Nature nurturing the while,
Let her to beauteous babe give birth."

Thus said sage Time, the Season's sire,
Unto his first physician, Sun;
For such he knew, in honest hire,
Full well and worthy would be done.

So Earth soon from her couch arose,
By smile released from pressing pain,
For, 'neath a heavy spread of snows,
She languishing so long had lain.

While kind nurse Nature wrapping bands
Of warm and balmy skies did bring;
And, holding in her gentle hands,
Soon swaddling clothed the new-born Spring.

Then, proud of her new-gotten charge,
She beckoned by the little birds;
And bade them, to the world at large,
Go whisper soft the welcome words.

The news on wings of gladness flew,
All, whether getting grief or glee,
Such too strange seeming to be true,
From far and near came self to see.

Mad March first viewed the infant fair,
And blustered forth full angrily,
In angry voice, to think it dare
Intrude so soon, then passed it by.

But April, such her happiness,
She drops of weeping joy did weep;
And baptizing with tears, did bless
The sweet babe smiling in its sleep.

Then May, she too, with heart love-light,
Near smothered it with kisses kind;
And from her lap, of blossoms bright,
Around its brow a wreath entwined.

Land, Air and Sea, each lent a voice
To loudly make the welkin ring;
E'en moody Man did too rejoice,
And help to hail the new-born Spring.

Hercules, the Hunchback: OR, The Fire-Fiends of Chicago.

A REVELATION OF THE GREAT CONFLAGRATION.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.

AUTHOR OF "FLAMING TALISMAN," "HOODWINKED,"
"BLACK CRESCENT," "BLACK HAND," ETC.

CHAPTER VII. THROUGH FIRE!

LIKE the crash of a myriad cymbals in
the hands of demons, rung the alarm-bells—
a shrieking tocsin, withering timid hearts
with its death-knell peals.

Fire! Fire! Fire! To right, to 'ft, in
front, behind, everywhere—hissing, arging,
roaring—on! on! came the ana, ada-like
flames, wreathing spout-columns of destruction,
and striking terror into the multitude.

Chicago was doomed. With its vast
wealth of capital and beauty, it was toppling
under the relentless swoop of the Fire-Fiend,
rushing forward, on hurricane wings, more
fierce, more overwhelming than the death-
blast of the desert.

And on the roof of a house in Polk street
an exciting scene was progressing, a contest
only second to the strife waging between
the Destroying Angel and his merciless
torch, and the resistance of man.

"Stand back! Stand back!" cried Gre-
ville, as the boy, Trix, halted at the frown-
ing muzzle of the pistol. "Stand, I say!—
or you die!"

Only the hesitation of a second.
"Let go! Let go!—or I'll strike!"
The heavy club twined in the air.

"Crack!" went the pistol.
The aim was hurried and bad; the bullet
missed its mark.

With a yell, Trix struck the weapon from
his grasp.
In self-defense, Greville had to loose his
hold upon the hunchback.

They grappled. Evard wrenched the
club from him.

But Trix was supple, active, strong. He
clung to his antagonist with a wild, clutch-
ing embrace, and ground his teeth in fury.

Backward from the eaves, catching short,
painful breaths in the thick smoke, hard
and savagely each struggled for the mastery.

"Zone! Zone!" cried the hunchback, the
large veins standing out on his face like
cords, in the severe physical task he was en-
during, and looking very like a demon him-
self, in the bright glare, with blood-smeared
face and starting eyes.

"Zone! Zone!"

"Hercules! Oh, Heaven—"
"Quick, girl! God give you strength!
Catch me about the neck! Quick!"

In a second she had obeyed, clinging to
the hold tenaciously.

"Hold fast! Hold fast, now!" swinging
round, with a lightning movement, and
gaining an additional grip on the eaves, with
his released hand. "Now, girl, when I
raise you up, reach over, and grasp the in-
side of the eaves!" the closing order in
breathless gasps.

Then, slowly, with the double weight
straining those more than human muscles,
he drew himself up.

"Keep cool! Keep cool!"—now!
Strangely calm throughout the terrible
ordeals, she again obeyed him promptly;
threw out one hand, and gained the precious
hold.

"Now, climb! Climb on my shoulder!
Up, quickly!"

He forced her upward, again sustaining
himself and her by the stern clinch of a
single hand—a Hercules, indeed!

Soon she was safe upon the roof.
But she paused, uttering a cry.

Two men were swaying dizzily, to one
side, on the very edge, battling for life!



"Come, come, come!" She receded slowly, beckoning Zone to follow.

As if by mutual consent, they staggered
back from the treacherous footing. In the
same moment, Trix broke away, and, snatch-
ing up the club, bounded to the front of the
house.

"Zone!—take care! It is a madman!"
shouted Greville.

Hercules was just gaining the roof, his
tired strength almost insufficient to extricate
him.

He saw his danger, saw the club poised
to strike.

"Trix! Boy!—you are mad! Keep off!"
"No! I'm not mad! I'm not mad!"

"What would you—urg—?"
"That! I fell the club. A little truer, and
it would have accomplished its murderous
intent! Only an inch short—it glanced off
the temple, hit the eaves, shot from the
hand that held it.

Still the blow was severe. The skin was
broken, and fresh blood streamed forth from
the wound.

Then a set of snaky fingers closed on the
throat of the Hunchback; his vision swam
in the vortex of partial insensibility.

"Remember the Rose-Lip!" hissed the
boy. "Murderer of my mother!—remem-
ber! It was you who killed Rose-Lip! Die!
die! die!"

Tighter, tighter pressed the strangling
fingers; darker grew the brain of Hercules,
as he quivered helplessly, for he dare not
let go his hold on the eaves.

Nearly overcome by his wrestle with
man, smoke and heat, Greville tottered for-
ward. A blow with his fist laid Trix sense-
less.

Aided by Zone—who roused from the
momentary stupor which seized her when
she first saw the men in combat—he grasped
Hercules by the collar, and dragged him in.

"Fly!" was the first hoarse word of the
rescued man.

Without waiting to hear more, Zone and
her lover hurried away over the roofs, flee-
ing from the devouring fires which roared
around them.

But they went alone.
Hercules turned to the trap.

"He must not die!" he muttered. "I
must save him, if it cost my life!"
He was thinking of Mortimer Gascon.

After all this trial, danger, excitement,
suffering, when nearly suffocated by the
dense volumes of smoke enshrouding him—
burned, scorched, blistered by flying sparks
and spits of flame thrown upon him by the
howling wind—blinded with heat and blood
—he suddenly remembered the helpless in-
valid below, and resolved to save him from
the horrible death pending.

He heard the window-glass cracking, and
jingling as it fell. The house had caught in
the sea of blaze; not a moment was to
spare.

He could hear the loud crash of falling
buildings close at hand.

Mortimer Gascon had risen from his
couch, and was standing weakly, holding
to the bed-frame for support.

"Hercules!—what is all this?" he asked,
as the other appeared.

"Judgment Day!—or the army of Satan
broke loose!" cried the Hunchback. "The
city is doomed! Every house is going to
ashes! Hark!—you can hear the flames
spouting like fountains! I must use you
roughly, Mortimer Gascon, if I would save
you. You can not walk!"

As he spoke, he lifted the invalid, and
bore him out.

The fire had entered the first and second
stories.

Twice was he forced back from the stair-
case by the choking, cindered air that pour-
ed in through the open trap.

But escape by the roof was cut off.
Like a river in mid-air, floated the dread
element overhead; to venture out was to
die.

Then down the stairs, groping as if
through an oven of heat and mist, the
dwarf started with his burden.

"Courage, here! Bury your face in my
coat; else you will strangle!"

"Hercules, we are doomed!" moaned
Gascon.

"No!" exclaimed the Hunchback, grind-
ing his teeth, part with pain, part with de-

termination. "Not—not doomed, though
Satan himself were holding us! Courage, I
say!"

Ay, courage. Both needed it.

It seemed to Gascon his bearer was wad-
ing through an avenue of hungry flame,
over a bed of coal.

He could hear the singe of hair on the
dwarf's head. His own flesh was crisp-
ing.

All around them closed the fire-tongues
—darting in from every side, searching for
that with which to feed their glowing
palates.

But Hercules held his burden tighter,
and, with a growling cry, pressed on-
ward.

Soon they reached the back door—when
lo! it was fastened; and the key had been
withdrawn.

Their last hope seemed gone!

Only the spot whereon they had been
forced to pause was free from hurt as yet;
and this must be enveloped shortly. They
had passed through the fire, which now
grew more raging behind them, as if anger-
ed at their preservation.

Hark! what was that? A dull, crackling
sound; the building was sinking in upon
them.

At the same instant, there issued from
the seething dome above a demoniacal
howl:

"Remember the Rose-Lip! Remember!
—ha! ha! ha!"

Like a knell of doom it rung in the
dwarf's ears, for it recalled a dark scene of
the past, more vivid now, when encompass-
ed by those red walls of death!

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

"HURRY, Zone!—in here, and we are
safe. The fire will never come this way."

Evard Greville drew the strange girl into
his house, away from the hustling, elbow-
ing, shouting sea of humans that had al-
most lifted them from their feet, as they
fled with the current of thousands who

were driven from their homes on that fear-
ful night.

In the silence of the broad hall they
paused—panting with exertion, weak ex-
cept with excitement—and listened to the
din without, which came to their ears like
the murmur and surge of a storm-lashed
ocean on a rocky shore.

"Hercules?" she exclaimed, suddenly,
and in anxious inquiry.

Not until now had they noted his ab-
sence.

"He probably lost us in the crowd," re-
turned Greville. "It is too late to think of
him now. No doubt he will be here in
search of you soon—knowing we fled to-
gether. Come with me."

She followed him to the parlor.

The lights were burning just as he had
left them when he started, in the early
evening, to keep his engagement with the
young fortune-teller.

"Alas, Evard! I fear I am ruined."
"Ruined? How?"

"I had a great deal of money in bonds—
my all. They were in the Red Room at
my house."

"Every thing there is certainly lost.
Why did you not think of it before our
flight?"

"I scarce know; I was so excited, I for-
got."

"You have passed through enough to
rob you of reason!" he exclaimed, recalling
the recent accident and battle on the roof
of Zone's house.

She shuddered at thought of her narrow
escape from death.

"All my instruments, too, and books—
they are lost."

"You will never need those again, Zone,
if you will but return my love."

He fixed his eyes in a passionate gaze on
that rude mask, which, he felt sure, was but
a screen to features even more beautiful
than her form.

But a new thought entered his brain.
What if Hermoine should discover Zone?—
ascertain the latter's character—a fortune-
teller, professing affiliation with spirits of
another world, a knowledge of the secrets
of the firmament, mesmeric powers, all of
which gave her a peculiar sway over that
minority of people whose solid sense took
flight before the exercise of trickish mysti-
fication.

What if Hermoine was listening?—had
heard him betray his love for the masked
queen?

He knew the woman he called his sister
was sensitive, proud, exacting. Then,
would there not be discord in the house ere
long? He must conduct her elsewhere, and
that immediately.

While these conjectures flashed across the
mind of Evard Greville, a feeling of equal
intensity, though different in mold, was kin-
dling a new excitement in Zone's bosom.

In that house was a record of some kind
—of great value to her—tied with a black
ribbon, sealed with a black seal. Only
Evard Greville knew where it was, only he
could give it to her; and she had won his
promise to let her have it.

Yet, a plan had formed within her. Why
not secure the record herself, since circum-
stances had thrown her here in its prox-
imity?

"Evard," she said, "I am worried. I
fear all is not right with Hercules."

He was returning from the doorway,
whither he had stepped to see if Hermoine
was eavesdropping.

"Do not be anxious, Zone."

"Yet, Evard, I—"

"What will you have me do?" He saw
that she hesitated in asking something.

"Humor me. Won't you go and look for
him?"

"As far as the door?"

"No; further. Walk a few squares over
the route we came."

"Why, it is folly! The streets are crowd-
ed. Even did we meet, we might pass each
other unawares."

"Still, I know you will humor me. I am
sure he will come that way, if he comes at
all; and I would have you hasten him."

Up to this moment he had not returned,
mentally, to his first surprise when, in the
house of Zone, he saw that she and the
Hunchback were acquainted. Now, the
singularity of the occurrence, the signs of
recognition between them, struck him.

He was shrewd, keenly perceptive, sus-
picious by nature—doubly so by his evil life,
and consequent fears. Though hoodwink-
ed in more ways than one, owing to his
mysterious infatuation with a woman whose
face he had never seen, he was yet disposed
to question those things which bore sem-
blance to personal involvement.

Instantly he asked himself:
"How came she to know the Hunch-
back? Why is she so anxious about him?"

He was gazing intently at her.

"Will you go, Evard?"

"Zone," slowly, "how long since you
made the acquaintance of Hercules?"

She started as he put the abrupt question;
but that start was so adroitly played into
another movement it escaped him.

She saw that she had betrayed herself.
She must answer promptly.

"I have not known him long, Evard. He
saved me from injury about a month ago,
from that same mad boy you encountered
on the roof. Who he is I know not. But I
am twice in his debt now—for my life. Is
it not natural that I should feel grateful to
my preserver? You would have lost Zone,
but for him."

Her closing speech had more effect than
all she had said preceding it—as she in-
tended.

Still he asked:
"And who is that mad boy?"
"A stranger. He came to me once to know his fortune. Since the moment of our interview he has—has—"

"Well?"
"Ridiculous as it may seem, Evard, he has loved me. He told me so. I made his tale of affection seem so nonsensical, that I believe it has been the cause of his insanity. And, his love turning to hate, he—"

"Never mind. Wait till I return, and tell me more. I will go after Hercules. But, first, promise me you will not stir from this room—that you will make no noise to betray your presence."

"I promise."

She was glad on any condition to see him depart.

Evard Greville walked with his head hung, after leaving the house. He was pondering deeply.

Hercules, the Hunchback, had been his tool in removing Mortimer Gascon. Hercules and Zone were acquainted. Zone had requested him to give her a certain parchment roll, which, through some mystery, she knew to be where he could find it. What use had she for that parchment? Should he believe in the recent sorcery at the house of the fortune-teller?

Items of this ilk were not overlooked by a man of his character, even under the spell of love. He had taught himself to sift those complications in life which bore directly on personal surrounding; and with crime on his conscience, fear of his late ghostly visitor in his heart, and conjectures as to the extent of the intimacy existing between Hercules and Zone, coming in his meditations, he had not taken a dozen steps ere he forgot why he was there on the street—oblivious to the great excitement prevailing on every side, heedless of those who rushed past him with a push and a jolt, sending up the scorching cry of "fire" from their hoarse throats.

When he left the parlor he closed the door, and Zone heard him turn the key in the lock.

She arose quickly, and tried the knob.

"He has fastened me in!" she exclaimed, lowly.

"What shall I do?" Lu said the old desk must be in this house; and the records are in the desk—hark! what's that?"

There was a light footfall in the entry; the rustle of a dress told it was a woman.

She drew back, glancing around her for a place of concealment. She was as anxious to remain unseen as was Evard Greville to have her presence kept secret.

"I must not be found here; it will ruin my plan. Perhaps it is a servant, and she will depart soon—if she enters at all, since the door is locked."

Before she could take a step, the door flew wide open.

"Delia Rivers!—she here!"

It was Hermoine. But how much unlike the beautiful woman of a few hours gone!

The plaster over the ugly knife-wound was displaced a little, and clots of blood stained her cheeks—cheeks of a deathly hue.

The lips were purpled and swollen, as if she had been cruelly biting them with her white, even teeth; her hair was disheveled; her attire was torn and loose; and in her large, lustrous eyes there was a peculiar, vacant stare, that could have but one meaning—insanity.

She smiled strangely, in a way idiotic, and beckoned, with a nervously-working hand, to Zone, who stood transfixed in contemplation of the unexpected sight.

"See!" said the maniac, in a voice so low, so weird, so melodious, that it sounded like the liquid murmur of some unearthly instrument, "he imprisoned you. It was unkind, wasn't it? But, I'll liberate you. How queer you look! What's that on your face? Take it off—don't be afraid! I won't hurt you. Ha! ha! ha! Come—come with me, I say; I'll take you away from prison. Come—come—come!" She receded slowly, beckoning Zone to follow.

CHAPTER IX.

JOSE MORENO SECURES A PRIZE.
"Strike! Strike the tongue!" roared Miguel, as he wrenched the tongue from their intended victim, and caught her arm in a vice-like grip.

Shriek after shriek rung from the lips of little Carl.

Lu was silent. She glared upon them with a deadly hate burning in her great, staring eyes, and breathed hard between her tight-locked teeth.

She might have saved herself from the impending blow, by letting go the boy and springing backward; but this she would not do.

She saw that Jose had determined on gaining possession of the child, and a resolution to prevent this, had alone nerved her to a threefold strength in her desperate resistance.

But Jose found it difficult to make the fatal thrust, without injury to the boy.

"Strike, there!" snarled Miguel, again, as he held on to the arm which still fought him, while the negro kept her eyes fixed upon Jose Moreno. "Strike, now! What are you at?—there'll be a botch here, presently!"

And all the while, Lu was dragging herself back, back—a fearful struggle, such as can only be where it is a fierce contest for life, with odds on a murderous side.

Miguel was enraged. Bussing himself with striving to give his companion a chance for the dead stroke, he was, at the same time, growling monstrous oaths, swearing by gobs, cursing the negro for her courage and endurance.

Suddenly, the glittering steel hissed downward. The blade was crimsoned by a spurt of blood.

With a moaning cry, she sunk over, and Jose snatched the screaming boy from her arms.

"Out of this quickly, now!" Jose cried, stifling Carl with his broad hand.

"Out it is!" exclaimed Miguel. "Curse the wench!—did I not say she would fight furiously? I am bruised to death!"

Jose was disappearing through the doorway—Miguel was following, when he felt a pair of long arms glide around him.

Ere he could recover from his surprise, he was hurled to the floor.

The negro had not been killed, as the villains supposed; but on her neck was a broad, bleeding gash that told how near the knife had striven for his mark.

She glowered over him, one knee on his breast, one hand at his throat—the other clenched and quivering aloft.

"Devils! you are alive again!" ejaculated the astounded ruffian.

"Yes!" she hissed, burying that claw-like hand deeper and deeper in his flesh; "I'm alive! You thought you'd kill old

Lu, eh?—you thought you'd kill me! You tried to do 't once before, in New Orleans! But you couldn't! Ha! ha-a! I have you, now!—I have you!" jerking him roughly and bumping his head spitefully.

He essayed, in vain, to release himself. He was strangled. That savage hold on his throat was closing tighter, tighter, till his ears were ringing and his face purpling.

"Leave off! Hag!—don't you see you are hurting me?" he articulated, in a half-choked, ludicrous whine.

"Hurting you!—hurting you, am I? Yes—I'll kill you! I'll kill you!"

Despite the process of strangulation, Miguel roared, raved, snarled, blasphemed—all uselessly; he was taken at a disadvantage, she had him firmly pinned, and, angered by the smart of the wound she had received, she pulled, shook, scratched, choked him, dealt him blows with her bony fist, while he writhed beneath her like a conquered giant.

Suddenly she desisted. She heard the tramp of feet in the entry.

A terrific kick burst the door open with a rattling quiver, and a wild-looking being, bearing a human burden, staggered drunkenly into the room.

It was the Hunchback, with Mortimer Gascon!

In her astonishment at his unexpected presence, his terrible appearance, she released her enemy and springing up.

Miguel was gone with the quickness of a flash—leaping out at the window, and dashing off at a furious pace.

"Cospita!" he muttered, as he found himself in the midst of confusion and terror that prevailed in the street. "What's this, now? Devils catch me! the whole city is afire! Where's the captain? Ha! he lied to me. He said Mortimer Gascon was dead; and I have just seen Mortimer Gascon with his eyes open! There's mystery! Hey, girl—stop! Look, now, by the imp's! here's a sweet rose." The last to a fleeing girl, who was staggering weakly, half-delirious, along with the affrighted throng.

By the bright glare, which lit up the street like a sun at midnight, he saw that she was beautiful of form and feature. Instantly his blue eyes burned with a lustful gaze.

"Will you stop?"—seizing her by the wrist.

"Oh, sir!—help me—help me—I can not go much further; I am falling. I shall perish!"

"Look, now; I'll help you—if you will kiss me once, with those red lips—"

He had placed an arm round her waist, when she uttered a scream and struggled to free herself.

"Lynch him! Lynch him!" yelled a voice.

A youthful figure launched itself upon Miguel, and dealt the latter a shot-like blow in the face.

"Take that!—devil eat you!" howled the ruffian, as he felled his assailant with one sweep of his ponderous fist.

But Miguel was now in trouble. The girl escaped him; several of the throng were rushing upon him, their cries telling of a determination to punish him summarily.

He was enraged, yet his rage was wise; and his discretion, coupled to a half-fear for his personal safety, caused him to wheel and—run against a diminutive object, overturning it completely, and wringing from it an ear-splitting squeal.

This object was a man, very short, very thin, who carried a carpet-bag. As he tumbled, the carpet-bag whizzed from his hand, and Miguel snatched it up, continuing his fight with the stolen property under his arm.

"Stop thief!" squeaked the diminutive man, darting after the Spaniard with the velocity of a meteor.

And as he ran, he was saying, muttering, crying to himself:

"That's him! That's Miguel! How fortunate! I'm on the track! Hooryay!—stop thief! I'm after the whole nest now, certain! Stop thief!—stop thief!"

"Stop thief!" bellowed the pursuing crowd.

Among the dense mass of men, women and children that poured through the Washington street tunnel, flying from the red-hot walls which were closing on the doomed city, a man was excitedly elbowing his way, glancing back, occasionally, with an anxious expression on his swarthy face.

This man was Jose Moreno. In his arms he carried the boy, Carl, and anon he hissed in the ears of the terrified child:

"Be still!—be still, I say, or I shall kill you!"

There was an exultant gleam in his dark eyes, a steely glitter that bespoke, together with the grim writhing of his lips, a secret rejoicing.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 110.)

Madeleine's Marriage:

OR,
THE HEIR OF BROADHURST.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLET,
AUTHOR OF "UNDER THE CLOUD."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MARRIAGE FOR A FORTUNE.

A LIGHT carriage rolled along the avenue to the front of the mansion at Broadhurst.

Dusk was closing in, and the lamps were lighted. When the carriage stopped, and the footman opened the door, a lady stepped out, and ran lightly up the broad stone steps.

The porter opened the door, and without a question or challenge on either part, she hurried past him, ascending the stairs.

Without stopping in the drawing-room, she went up another flight, and tapped at the door of Mrs. Clermont's dressing-room.

"Is your mistress dressed?" she said, to the maid, who presented herself.

"Not yet, ma'am," was the reply.

"Never mind; she will see me! I will go in."

Little Oriel came bounding out.

"Mamma is in my room!" cried the child.

"She is taking out my dress for the party to-night!"

"Are you going too, my little dear?"

"Not with mamma; but somewhere else."

The maid explained that an early children's party had been arranged to take place in the drawing-room in honor of Oriel's birthday. The invited guests would arrive in a very short time.

"And you should see the pretty presents!" exclaimed the excited child. "They are on the table in mamma's morning-room. Such

lovely presents. Come with me and see them!"

"No, my love; I want to see your mamma. I will go down directly, and look at them."

The child ran back to announce the visitor, and in a moment Mrs. Byrne was fondly embraced by her friend.

"I am so glad you let me come up without formality, Madeleine! It is so charming here; a *bijou* of a dressing-room; and such a suite of rooms! You are a queen; and I love to see your crown and robes!"

"You bring sunshine to me, Ada!" said her friend, almost mournfully.

"As if you lacked it, in the blaze of such prosperity!"

"The blaze you speak of is a lurid glare, that withers and scorches me, Ada!"

"Nonsense! but I am so glad to hear that you have consented at last, to come out from your gloom and seclusion, and mingle in society."

"I have not been secluded," rejoined the lady. "I have received the visits of all the neighborhood, you know."

"But you have not returned them."

"There was reason for that, in my recent widowhood."

"True; but time enough has been given to sorrow; and you know, Madeleine, you have duties to the world."

"As the mistress of Broadhurst, I suppose so!"

"Of course. The whole country is delighted with you. Lady Porter says you are like her lost daughter; Lady Blake thinks you superb; Mrs. Drayton pronounced you a superior artist and a splendid musician; Mrs. Hall says you are so brilliant in conversation! The ladies are all charmed—and the gentlemen! Well, we will say nothing about them!"

"I am hardly worth while, as I shall soon sink out of their remembrance."

"Come, now, have this eager little girl dressed and sent down-stairs, and let me help you make your own toilet, while I have some serious talk with you."

Little Oriel was radiant in her evening dress of airy muslin, her dark curls floating over her neck. After the maid took her from the room, her mother directed her own toilet to be laid out. It consisted of a dress of glossy gray silk, with sweeping train, and a shawl of exquisitely fine black draped lace. Her hair was already arranged, and she wore no coiffure. The curls of bright chestnut were brushed back and laid in a Grecian coil, secured by a black ribbon; a stray ringlet or two escaping, and curling round the temple.

"No diamonds?" asked the visitor.

"Not to-night. I have not laid aside mourning."

"You ought to wear colors by this time. Gray or black is not becoming to you, Madeleine."

"I know it is not."

"How long do you mean to wear the disfigurement?"

"How long? As long as I stay here!"

"Have you forgotten, Ada, how nearly my year has expired?"

"No, I have not forgotten. But you are not to leave us at the end of the year."

"How can I remain? Look at the conditions prescribed in the will."

"You are mad to talk of giving up this splendid inheritance! To what would you return? Whither would you go?"

"I can not tell whither. I have nothing before me but beggary!" the lady answered, sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her hands.

"I will not have you speak so, Madeleine!"

"I have been striving to face the worst, ever since I came! But oh, it is very, very hard! Not for myself, but for my child!"

"You must be brave for her sake, darling!"

"I have tried to be; I have prayed for strength to be. But she loves all these things; she is so happy! She could have such advantages—such an education!"

"Certainly; and she could make a marriage that would place her where she belongs."

"I have thought of that, too. It seems so cruel to her that I must drag her down to poverty and low life, just as she has had a glimpse of that which is her birthright. I should not suffer so much but for poor Oriel—my poor little girl!"

She bowed her head on her hands, and wept bitterly. Ada started to her feet.

"Madeleine, it is not possible that you think for one moment of surrendering your place, and this noble fortune?"

"How can I retain it? And the time is so fearfully near!"

"How can you retain it? You know there is a way!"

"And what a way! The poor woman shuddered, and again gave way to tears."

"Come, this will not do; you will not be fit for Lady Stanton's party. I wish I had been honored with an invitation. Go, and subdue hearts, Madeleine, and take the delight of reigning over them. Then come back, and stand over your child's couch, and, if you dare, even think of such a thing as deeming that bright creature to a life of poverty and humiliation."

"It is a bitter cup; I have drank it to the dregs!" moaned the young mother.

"Dash it away, then, from her lips and your own! Oriel will bless you as her guardian angel."

"And she will curse me, will she, if I do not save her from so terrible a fate?"

"I can not tell; your own conscience will reproach you, when it is too late. You have not even the shelter you had to receive you!"

"I know it; but I thought—by giving lessons, I might earn—"

"Nonsense! You are a traitress to yourself and your child—talking or thinking thus! Come, finish dressing; I want to show you the effect."

The last touches were soon completed, for a plain toilet had been chosen. Mrs. Byrne took her friend's hand, and led her to the Poyche mirror.

"Look at yourself, Madeleine."

The glass reflected a slender, graceful form, and a pale, beautiful face; not a little improved by the evening dress.

"There, I defy any one to look at you and not admire you!" cried her volatile friend. "Now let us have no more talk of renunciation."

"You would do in my place, Ada, as I shall do."

"Shall I tell you what I should do? I would accept the hand of the one who stands ready to save you from the great misery which threatens you!"

"Ada!"

"You know he aspires to your hand; you know he—"

"Loves me? You dare not say that!"

"No; for he is one of the inscrutables, and keeps a mask on his face, and a curb on his actions. But he wishes to marry you; all your acquaintances know that."

"He would marry me, perhaps, for the sake of sharing my fortune."

"And you can only save it by marrying him. So you are quits."

"I could never be the wife of such a man, Ada!" groaned her friend, growing very pale.

"Why not? He is handsome and aristocratic-looking. He has good blood, being your cousin; he is well educated, and refined in his manners—"

"There is something about him that repels and frightens me. Oriel used to call it 'the devil in his eyes.'"

"I grant you he repels and fascinates at the same time. He is a study in the way of character. What of that? He secures you in your fortune; he opens the gates of good society to you and to the lovely girl who will look to you for her happiness."

"Oh, Lewis! Lewis!" sobbed the stricken woman.

"No more, dearest, of such thoughts. I heard the roll of your carriage. Does Mr. Marritt go with you?"

"No, he does not; but he may be there. I wish I had not promised to go!"

"You will enjoy the scene."

"I shall not; but Mr. Marritt urged me so. He seemed to think it a duty."

"And so it is. You owe it to yourself—your position, your future influence. Now, no more sadness. Let me dust a little powder on your red eyelids."

The carriage was announced. Mrs. Byrne said she would return home, and the friends separated at the door.

It was the first time Madeleine had accepted an invitation to a large evening party. She had dined out a few times at long intervals, and had received the visitors who called upon her; pleading her mourning as an excuse for seclusion. On this occasion she had complied with urgent entreaties to go; and in her restless, discomposed state, she felt as if the sight of gay revelry might be of service in diverting her thoughts from the gloomy subject that absorbed them.

She could not fail to hear the hum of admiration that followed her wherever she moved, in the brilliant drawing-rooms; and if it caused her a throb of pleasure, it only proved that she was like the rest of her sex.

Many distinguished-looking strangers were presented to her, and she saw that her beauty impressed them. She refused all invitations to dance. But she walked through the splendid assemblage and sat in the curtained alcoves, and looked over the various prints and other curiosities shown her, and conversed with companions, whose high culture gave her new ideas and information.

She could not help, for the moment, forgetting all her sorrows.

Gradually she yielded to the seductive witchery of the scene. The rich color mantled in her cheek; her eyes sparkled with pleasure; the grace of the soul was in every movement. Many who looked at her thought they had never seen so beautiful a creature.

Presently she was led into the music-room. The hostess had begged her for a song. When seated at the instrument, some one turned the leaves for her who evidently understood the music. She had a rich contralto voice, and infused pathos and power into the simple words she sung. The effect she produced was gratifying to her. She played an air from a popular opera; then an Italian song was asked for, and she poured into it her whole soul—sweeping the instrument with the skill of one well trained in the science of melody. She had improved her lonely hours by practice in the arts she loved.

As she turned to rise, amid the murmurs of applause and delight, she saw that it was Marritt who had been turning the leaves for her. He offered her his arm to conduct her into the supper-room.

When the supper was over, and the guests were returning to the drawing-room, Madeleine whispered to her companion that she would like to return home as soon as possible.

"I will send to see if the carriage has come up," he said, and dispatched one of the servants for that purpose. After a few words of conversation with Lady Stanton, Madeleine took his arm to the dressing-room, and in due time was handed into her carriage.

Marritt expressed his great pleasure at having seen that she really enjoyed the evening. Why did Madeleine feel ashamed to own how much she had enjoyed it? But she could not deny it. Jasper accounted for her improved spirits by referring to the long depression she had endured. It was human nature to rise the higher when sadness had long held the spirit in a painful bondage. How evident it was that the duty of a mourner was to seek diversion!

The widow could hardly agree with him; but she felt her heart lightened of its burden. She smiled and talked pleasantly during the drive. As he handed her up the marble steps of her home, Marritt asked if she would favor him with a private conversation in the drawing-room before she retired.

Madeleine led the way thither. Jasper closed the doors and then took a seat at a short distance from the lady.

"I trust you will pardon me, Mrs. Clermont," he said, with some hesitation and seeming embarrassment, "for intruding on you a matter of business at this late hour. But—"

"Spare yourself explanation," interrupted the lady. "I have been expecting this communication."

She threw herself into an arm-chair, and leaned her head on one hand, which partly concealed her face. Marritt noticed the unstudied grace of her attitude, but his heart beat not the quicker.

"You are aware, then—" he began.

"I am aware that my year of grace expires in three days. I could not well forget it."

"I trust you believe me perfectly sincere when I express to you my extreme regret that any necessity should arise for annoying you. If it could possibly be avoided, you should never hear a word on the subject."

Madeleine lifted her head, and shot a glance at the face of the speaker. A polished crystal could not be more impassive; ice, touched by a sunbeam, could not be clearer. The very thought of his soul seemed reflected in his eyes.

"But you know, my dear madam, no power is left in my hands. Like yourself, I am compelled to submit to what has ever appeared to me a most unjust condition of my late cousin's will."

Madeleine had noticed for months past that in referring to her uncle he always styled him "cousin," as if to keep the relationship in view.

"I have made some inquiries," he resumed, "as to the probability of success, in case the will should be disputed. So absurd a diversion of the property from the nearest blood relative, might be prevented by the interference of the court—"

"Do not trouble yourself," rejoined the lady, in cold and measured tones. "I have no intention of disputing the will."

"Surely you would not give up—"

"If I must be, I can relinquish

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THE NEW SERIAL

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is one of the dramatist-author's most admirable and effective productions, viz.:

WITHOUT MERCY;

OR,

THREADS OF PURE GOLD.

It is characterized by all of the graphic force of narrative, the keen character discrimination, and the effective dramatic situations which distinguish this writer's works, and will be eagerly welcomed by our readers.

Our Arm-Chair.

The "Gift of Gab."—Some journalists are frequently inveighing against the "gift of gab," which, their readers are told, makes the American a kind of talking nuisance. These censors do not say that they would have silence the rule and speech the exception, although it is fair to infer that such is their wish. It would, perhaps, be cruel to dose them with their own medicine, for, of all talkers, some of our "journalists" are the most irrefragable. They talk, (write) upon every conceivable theme, from a Sanskrit particle to a dissertation on chums. They are at once judge, jury and counselor, and what they don't know is not worth mentioning. But, after all, they are not more hurtful than musketeers. They may annoy; may sting sometimes and give slight pain; but they "don't amount to much" in a solid way; and boys who are told by them not to cultivate their gift of speech need take no more offense than if a musketeer had punctured their ear.

This gift of speech is a blessed gift, and can not be too highly cultivated. He or she who has it not lives at a constant disadvantage; every hour of the day brings its mortification; to be unable to express ideas clearly and promptly is a serious drawback, as those who are thus disqualified most painfully realize. Hence, we say, cultivate the "gift of gab," study not only words and their uses, in a manner that will make us crimson with shame. It is then the thought comes to us, if we had been more careful in finding out who her associates were, if we had refused to allow her to read immoral publications—in fact, if we had bestowed more love upon her and care for her, all this misery might have been prevented.

We notice the drunkard in his wild career—the misery and cruelty he is heaping on the ones he should protect, yet we don't work enough to keep the young man away from the bar-room in the first place, nor caution him that his fate may be a dreadful one, if he does not stop where he is. We do not think our friends can go wrong, but when it is too late, we commence to think of pulling the check-rein.

We wonder that young girls go astray, and some day we shall learn of them in a manner that will make us crimson with shame. It is then the thought comes to us, if we had been more careful in finding out who her associates were, if we had refused to allow her to read immoral publications—in fact, if we had bestowed more love upon her and care for her, all this misery might have been prevented.

When we go through our prisons, and see the young convicts working side by side with those hardened in crime, we wonder to ourselves, and say, had these youths found home too pleasant to leave it for all, had they possessed loved ones, who showed them attention enough to point out the way of the transgressor, would not they now be ornaments to their country, and not now be passing their best days in the jail, shut out from home, shut out from the bright world, and having their consciences told them that others were to blame as well as themselves for being there?

When the bridge breaks and the cars go crashing down the side of the ravine, sending its thousand souls into eternity, it is then too late to say the supports should have been stronger.

When you look into the coffin and see the face of your mother, vain will be your regrets if you have not done your duty by her, while she was living, if you have not cherished and loved her, protected and made her burdens of life less hard to bear. The cross words you have said to her, the petulant answers you have made her, the many ways which you had that she did not like, the many evenings you left her alone, while they were roaming about enjoying yourself, will all come back to you, and you will say to that inanimate body, "Oh, mother, if you were only alive again, I would be a better boy and live only for you!"

Too late! Ah, these are sad words to pen, and how many of us have been called upon to repeat them through our life? Yes, and will be called upon to do so again if we do not begin a new life.

It is much better to do a good deed than repent of not having done it; it is better to love our neighbor and assist him now, than wish we had done so when he no more needs any thing on this earth.

Let us all take the words of the convict home to ourselves, and let it always stand before us as a lesson. Now is the time; by-and-by will be too late. EVE LAWLESS.

abuse of good gifts will not fail to reverse them from blessings.

Codes of honor vary essentially in different social grades, yet from highest to lowest are too often but the empty shell out of which individualism and selfishness eat the kernel. Storing principle is a scarce commodity. People seem to have arrived at the conclusion that the world is made up of such arrant knaves that honest men are pushed completely out of foothold.

We don't quite approve of hearing ourselves termed cheats to our very faces, and so we smuggle our questionable practices under a garb of cant, which is all the better if it is fastened with a golden button. Heaven's own teachings are made subservient to self-interest, and a pew in a fashionable church covers many a flaw in the faithful pursuance of business avocations; an hour's nap each Sabbath morning, with the clergyman's voice for a lullaby, will tally against seventy times seven small discrepancies of the week.

It may be well enough to keep up the universal face, and in humbugging mankind humbug ourselves as well; but for the sake of comfort, good sirs, turn the bright side out. Tinsel is better than rust; if you've not the true metal, give us at least the best you have at hand.

Then out upon all gloomy creeds and isms. The religion that pulls on a long face and a piteous whine must carry black depths somewhere concealed. It is just as natural for a pure, healthful temperament to dispense cheerfulness, as for a summer day to be soft and sunshiny. Nature recuperates through storms, life through trials; but these are only the accidents in the body of time.

Disagreeable burdens will never lighten by shifting them to other people's shoulders; some poor wretch will always groan beneath the load; but a whole mountain-heap of affliction can be melted away if you face it with a cheerful and determined will.

J. D. B.

TOO LATE.

A PRISONER under sentence of death, who had been afforded every comfort of spiritual aid, remarked that, if he had had as much care paid to his soul as had been granted him during his incarceration, he might not have been where he was. There was a lesson in that—a lesson to come home to us all. We do our duty—but we do it too late. We let people go to the bad all their lives, and then we expect to cram enough good into them in a week to make up for our neglect.

We often neglect the real objects of charity, and when we hear that such a one was found dead from exposure and from lack of the necessities of life, we feel conscience-stricken, and strive to make it easy with ourselves by giving him or her a respectable funeral.

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"FAT CONTRIBUTOR" ON HIS TRAVELS.

DETAINED AT A JUNCTION.

You desire me to send you some incidents of travel. All right. One of the incidents of travel is to be prevented from traveling by six or eight hours' detention at a junction, waiting for a train. That is my fix now. A junction is supposed to be a point where two railroads intersect and trains connect. But, bless you, they never connect! When one road gets out a time-table the other gets out another, by which it is impossible to make a connection short of six hours. This is done, I suspect, in the interest of the "Junction House"—the only house for miles around—owned by the railroad company. They give you old junk for breakfast at the junction, and you have to sleep yourself. Every traveler would shun a junction if he could.

I have been doomed to remain here eight

mortal hours already. The landlord of the Junction House, a weak, inoffensive old man, permits me to sit in the parlor. He remarks that I will find it rather lonesome waiting, though, he adds, with a furtive glance at the kitchen, where old Mrs. Junk is blowing up the hired girl, "they make it lively enough for me."

I could make myself tolerably comfortable were it not for a young man on the floor above who is learning to play on some fiendish instrument of brass, and the tortures to which he subjects the inoffensive gamut would hardly be endured anywhere else but at a junction. Now "Old Dog Tray" writhes and howls in pain through the convoluted brass, and it does seem as though that faithful domestic canine was being dragged through by the tail!

To divert myself I am obliged to turn to the little collection of books on the center-table. Here is a Life of Washington, "written for the American Sunday School Union," the historical parts extracted from the best authors—item: Wonder if they administered chloroform in extracting them. The frontispiece represents Washington crossing the Delaware. Washington has already crossed, and is mounted on a high-stepping horse, surrounded by his staff, handsomely mounted in gold lace and cocked hats. A mounted cannon is being drawn up the steep bank by a squad of artillerymen. George is represented in full parade dress with that tenacity to facts observable in all representations of that historic event.

As no life of Washington would be complete without the hatchet story, I am gratified to find this one not only has it but has it illustrated. (It is said that Weems hatched up that story himself, and Washington let him hatch it.)

In the picture stands old man Washington, pointing with a look of griefed though indignant inquiry to the cherry tree, so ruthlessly cut down in the flower of its youth—gone even beyond the aid of Cherry Pectoral. The mother is looking over the stern parent's shoulder, as if urging George to own up. To the right stands George in knee-breeches and a roll-over collar, with his little hatchet in his hand, and a Father-of-his-country look upon a face that seems to have worn out several such bodies.

How anybody could look at that old head and charge it with concocting any such boyish caper as hewing down fruit trees is more than I can imagine.

From the inspiring Life of Washington I turn to "Fowler's Self-Instructor in Pneumology." It contains a chart of somebody's head. These charts are a great thing, and no person that has reached the age of ninety years should be without one. They teach a man what he is fit for. No young man should embark in any kind of business without first getting a "chart" of his head, in order to know to a certainty whether the physical formation of his skull is adapted to that line of business.

The chart accompanying the book must have been flattering to the individual whose head was measured for it. I am glad to see that his "organic quality" is large. I don't know exactly what organic quality is, but I imagine it is a very desirable quality for a man to have. His "digestive power" (first time I ever knew digestion lay in the head) is also large—a fact that may not afford the highest gratification to his boarding-house keeper.

Of all charts I have seen emanating from phrenologists, the desirable qualities are always placed upon it "average." This gives satisfaction to the person receiving it, and he feels as though he was getting the worth of his money. What worlds of talented brains have these charts professed to map out that no explorer other than the phrenologist ever discovered!

I had a chart made of my head once, and this is the way it ran:

Vital temperament large; in a fight with a man you would go for his vitals. Breathing power large; you would require more clothes than ordinary people if you drank. Circulating power dependent in a great measure on the amount of circulating medium you had on hand at the time you were circulating. Digestive power full, if you are not too full yourself. Mental temperament large. Dangerous for a man of your brains to have too much mental temperament. Activity large—when the gong sounds for dinner. Friendship so very large it wants restraining. You are so much attached to a friend there is no telling how much you wouldn't borrow of him. Combativeness large. If the sidewalk flew up and hit you in the face, you would hit the sidewalk back just as hard. Destructiveness small. You will never set the North River on fire. Cautionousness immense. You would accept a gift-horse without first looking in his mouth. Spirituality depends on the quality of the spirit. Hope is bulky, standing over six feet in its stockings. Constructiveness stands right out on your head like a bump on a log. You ought to be able to make any thing. All you need is a chance to make a fool of yourself. Order is large, when you can get credit for what you order. Tune is small, averaging a dozen to the pound. Color is full, and you nose it.

The chart added that, with my extraordinary predilection for astronomy, I ought to go into well-digging; and that few people with a constitution such as I had—ever ought to work for a living.

"Nurse and Spy" is the next book I turn to for diversion during my imprisonment at the Junction. It is the "experience and adventures of a woman in hospitals, camps and battle-fields." In the parlance of the West, she is a d— of a fellow. She tells how she was once shot at by a secesh woman, who missed her. She turned and fired at her assailant, but not desiring to kill her shot her through one of her hands as she raised them, supplicating mercy. She then dismounted and tied the woman who had attempted to diminish the Nurse and Spy corps of the Federal army to her saddle by a strap around her wrist, and thus dragged her at her horse's heels into McClellan's camp—an exceedingly humane treatment of one woman by another, and a powerful argument in favor of female suffrage.

"This woman," continues the narrator, "afterward became an intense Unionist and one of the most efficient nurses in McClellan's camp." I should judge so, from my limited knowledge of female character! I should say that the most effectual way to win over a woman of rebel proclivities would be to shoot her through the hand and then drag her into camp by the wrist—in a horn!

But the train is coming, and I can make my escape from the Junction.

"FAT CONTRIBUTOR."

Foolscap Papers.

The Tower of Babel.

No doubt you little boys and girls have heard of the Tower of Babel—from other little boys and girls who go to Sunday-school, but you probably have not heard that my venerable uncle, Jerry Boam Whitehorn, was the originator of the enterprise, which I beg to inform you he was.

Old Jerry, how well I remember him! He died regretted. Everybody regretted him who had any acquaintance with him. He died from being housed up too long in a close, ill-ventilated room. He had got to be disgusted with mankind, turning hermit and retiring to the solitudes and reflections of a dungeon in the penitentiary.

Well, old Jerry was a real live Yankee, and went to Asia in those early days in a peddle clocks and eye-salve. His eye-salve was good—at least, no one who once used it could see any thing wrong in it afterward; but the newspapers of that time say that his clocks never lost an hour any more than sixty minutes in an hour any day. But, while time passed very slow with his clocks, his time passed very fast, and he was getting very old, and his prospects of a better land were not flattering.

One day an idea struck him and he went to the king and suggested the design of building a tower which should reach the heavens—which he said were just in sight—and open a direct communication which would entirely do away with the old route, and offer superior inducements to through passengers. He said there could be a toll-gate established at this end from which a great revenue could be derived; and eating-houses, also, along the route would bring in quite a fortune in the shape of postage-stamps.

Jerry was hailed as the father of his country by the people who didn't have much confidence in the old route, and a company was immediately formed—with my venerable uncle as president—to undertake the undertaking, and an engineer was sent to survey the shortest route. Every thing was excitement, and in a short time the tower was commenced. Everybody in the kingdom worked on it for dear life—the king would have killed them if they hadn't—and the tower rose to a vast height, every day. My uncle superintended the job, and every evening when the day's work was over he would stand on the top brick and reach up with a pole to see if they were within reaching distance yet.

But, though they were not quick in reaching the other end of the route, my old uncle every night went to bed in the best of humor, for the higher they went the colder it got and the chances of reaching a warmer climate seemed less—a fear which always had preyed upon his mind, and which the Whitehorn family even to the present day inherits.

The work went along for a great length of time, and it is due to the credit of my revered uncle to say that he never once failed to draw his weekly salary, or to ask every half-hour of the top bricklayer if he had bumped his head against anything yet.

By and by the tower reached the height of twenty-one miles, and no station yet!

(A stairway ran circling around the outside to the top. Think what a stretch of banisters to slide down on, oh, ye youths of romantic temperaments!) My uncle got very much worried for fear the moon might run against his structure and overturn his hopes; warm dinners got scarce; all the men being employed on the work, the distillery had stopped; in fact, every thing conspired to render him wretched, and, to crown his misery, one day while he was figuring out a problem in algebra, to find out exactly at what hour and minute they wouldn't reach there, he discovered that the workmen began to talk pretty much as they pleased in different tongues, and so skillfully that you couldn't make out any thing about it. He tried to find out if any teachers of languages had been around that night, as emissaries of some opposition country. To make matters worse, the men took advantage of my uncle's ignorance to call him the very worst kind of names. Everybody grew garrulous, and work slackened.

This was the commencement of "too much talk spoils the work." What did it mean? he asked himself. Himself gave it up.

While he was pondering on this confusion of tongues, and noticing that, when one asked for mortar, the other fellow would give him a brick—on the side of the head—the foundations, which had been put in by a contractor, began to sink to the depth of seven miles, and then seven miles of the top fell with a crash, leaving my dear old uncle up there; but concluding not to remain, he fell to the ground, and would have killed himself if he had not fortunately fallen on the soft part of his head, and people said his intellect was just as good after his fall as it ever had been before; they could observe no change.

But his pride did not suffer by his misfortune. With a magnanimity worthy of his illustrious line, he went to sawing wood, which he followed during the rest of his life.

How often has he taken me on his knee and told me the story of his celebrated tower, and regretted that he never finished it! Poor fellow! I think that was his only chance of ever getting there.

But he was "a brick."

WASHINGTON WHITEHORN.

HOW TO PUT CHILDREN TO BED.

Not with a reproof for any of the day's omission or commission. Take any other time but bedtime for that. If you ever heard a little creature sighing or sobbing in its sleep, you could never do this. Seal their closing eyelids with a kiss and a blessing. The time will come, in too soon, when they will lay their heads upon their pillow, lacking both. Let them then, at least, have this sweet memory of a happy childhood, of which no future sorrow or trouble can rob them. Give them their rosy youth. Nor need this involve wild license. The judicious parent will not so mistake my meaning. If you have ever met the man or the woman whose eyes have suddenly filled with a little child has crept trustfully to its mother's breast, you may have seen one in whose childhood's home dignity and severity stood where love and pity should have been. Too much indulgence has ruined thousands of children; too much love not one.

AFFLICTION follows the afflicted.

Readers and Contributors.

TO CORRESPONDENTS AND AUTHORS.—No MSS. received that are not fully prepaid in postage.—No MSS. preserved for future orders.—Unavailable MSS. promptly returned only where stamps accompany the inclosure, for such return. MSS. postage is two cents for every four pages, or fraction thereof, but must be marked Book MS., and be sealed in wrappers with open end, in order to pass the mails at "Book rates."—No correspondence of any nature is permissible in a package marked as "Book MS."—MSS. which are imperfect, or not used or wanted. In all cases our choice rests first upon merit or fitness; second, upon excellence of MS., as "copy," third, length. Of two MSS. of equal merit we prefer the shorter.—Never write on both sides of a sheet. Use Commercial Note size paper as most convenient to editor and compositor, leaving off each page as it is written, and carefully giving it its full or page number.—A rejection by no means implies a want of merit. Many MSS. unavailable to us are well worthy of use.—All experienced and popular writers will find us ever ready to give their offerings early attention.—Correspondents must look to this column for all information in regard to contributions. We can not write letters except in special cases.

Authors will please bear in mind that all MSS. to publishers (other than Book MS.) must be fully prepaid at letter rates.

We will find room for "United Affections" in a revised form: "Roger's Slide;" "On the Sanguin;" "Wanderer's Lament;" "Requiescent;" "April and Her Pets;" "Floy's Hero;" "Cuth Penny;" "As It Was and Is;" "The White Lilies;" "I;" "Myself and Thee."

Must say no to "In School;" "Doubling Cape Horn;" "Confessions of a penitentiary;" "Captured by the Indians;" "Poisoned Pastilles;" "The Great Pan-jourm;" "A Girl's Lesson;" "Brave Joe Brady;" "Old Man's Curio;" "How My Macy Won a Ribbon;" "The Sign of the Cross;" "The Lone Maid of the Hill;" "Greatest Persimmons Roberts;" "My Third Engagement;" "I Will and You Won't."

R. V. The story named commenced in No. 91. C. G. Serials are "in order" if they are crisp, spirited, original and thoroughly plotted. We do not care for what is immature.

A Lady. There is no law to punish literary thefts.

Again we must say we do not write to authors concerning the acceptance or rejection of contributions. We answer through this column.

JOHN D. The Journal is regularly mailed. The trouble must be in your own post-office.

J. C. S., Rochester. Have answered you by mail.

W. O. W. Judging by your specimen contribution, we should say you are wholly unqualified to write for the press. "Go in for" your Analysis and Grammar.

JNO. F. H. We can supply the numbers named.

LUCY Z. Z. A good friend never would have advised you to leave school. Only a "bad friend" would have done that. Stay where you are.

MISS CLARA S. G. Lady clerks average about nine dollars per week salary. It is very hard work for a woman to stand twelve hours steadily on her feet.

J. C., Brooklyn. Will try and give room for the poem. We can not indicate the authorship of the poem recited by Mr. Pope.

SNEEZWEEK. All of Mrs. Southworth's novels are republished in the form of serials, they appear in the Ledger. It is cheaper to buy them in book shape. The books most useful in a Debating Society are books of reference and information, which our debaters can study and refer to in their debate. What you say of our "Dime Debater and Chairman's Guide," is true—it is one of the most thoroughly useful books of its kind published at any price.

J. H., Camden. We will give place to your "experiment." There is no popularity in such productions, yet they will interest a certain class very much.

CLARISSA H. We are not in want of matter such as you indicate. We are simply overstocked.

CHAS. READE, JR. Certainly we do not correct "bad grammar and poor punctuation." We reject all contributions which need such revision. It is as much as we can do to read what is offered without revising.

JOSEPH. There are several depilatory compounds. Ask any good druggist.

S. W. L. Our population is about forty-one millions. Consult your elementary spelling-book for the information required.

W. J. BARRON'S MS. is returned by the post-carrier marked "not found."

CHARLESTON. We know not how many numbers Capt. Reid will make of his Tracked to Death—probably about fifty. Your other queries we do not comprehend.

J. L. We can not tell you regarding the "Self-Instructing Telegraph Instruments." Write to the postmaster to see if he has any for sale.

HANNIBAL. There are no "chemicals" for testing diamonds. Diamond dealers use only their own eyes.

S. T. W. Several preparations are advertised to remove sun spots, freckles, etc., the best permanent remedy is to get the blood in good condition, then the cuticle of the face will become clear.

EMILY R. C. If you have offended, surely it is easy to acknowledge it, and to say you are sorry.

H. E. S. Our new volume commenced with No. 106, (March 4th). Ink spots may be removed by a saturated solution of cyanure of potassium applied on the spot with a camel's hair-brush, or a drop of spot in milk, then cover it with common salt; or, oxalic acid will take out the mark, using it only in a weak solution. We do not know who is President of the Apprentices' Library.

H. L. S. Antioch, recently destroyed by an earthquake, is the Antioch of the Bible. It was, in Christ's time, a great city. Its destruction is now complete.

BEN BOLZ. Malleable iron is cast-iron rendered pliable by a certain process familiar to all iron-workers.

ELLEN TRACY. It is true that Alice Cary never was married, and also true that those who prate familiarly of her know very little about her. Her few—very few real intimates do not talk of her in print. It is left for those who had merely a calling acquaintance with her to "write up" her heart history.

MAIDEN. If you have received from your lover a verbal offer of marriage, it is sufficient whereon to ground a suit for a breach of promise; young ladies seldom gain any advantage by commencing breach of promise prosecutions, and only render themselves conspicuous, and frequently ridiculous. They should be exceedingly careful not to move in so serious a matter without just reason for so doing.

AFFIANCÉE. We can not judge for you as to the proper length of engagements, since circumstances materially alter cases; but the old Roman Law was that "two years were the limit of betrothal, the duration of a betrothal; if the man who has engaged to marry a girl, does not do so within two years, the girl is released from the contract," if she so elects.

MOTHER. Keep your children away from beehives and hornets' nests, and they will not be so frequently stung; but, to remove insect stings, press the barrel of a watch key over the part stung, so as to re-expose the sting, which can then be removed. The part should be then covered with a piece of lint soaked in extract of lead, or in ammonia, or carbolic acid.

THEOLOGIST. The Buddhists extend over a portion of the Chinese Empire, and are scattered throughout Asia. Their belief is that Buddha, God, like the Hindoo Vishnu, had ten incarnations and became man for a time; they believe in no First Cause, but consider matter eternal, and that the animal existence has, in itself, its own rise and destiny; they believe that hell is the lowest estate; animals the next; the third, man, and also that men can be raised to demigods for acts of merit and deeds of goodness.

YACHTSMAN. There is a superstition among sailors that prevents them from throwing egg-shells overboard, when at sea. They believe that old "Mother Carey" will get in them and raise a gale of wind.

WALLACE W. The best method of destroying wasps, is to use the method of applying by means of a small stick of cedar wood, which the acid does not touch elsewhere than on the wart, and do not use too much.

FLORA McFLATTERY. Black lace dresses over light-colored silk skirts are very fashionable this year; but they are so costly that few can afford them.

YOUNG MISS. Boots with rows of buttons on either side are fashionable this year, for ladies.

EWIE C. A new style of dressing the hair is to have your curls depending from the top of the head, where they can be fastened by a bow of bright ribbon, or knot of black velvet.

H. KIPP. Where the law requires stamps on documents, do not omit them. As the stamp laws are frequently changed, it is advisable to look at the tables of the recognized clerks, for the year, to ascertain the amount required to prepay your matter. It is now decided (although the law itself is unchanged) that all MSS., book magazines and newspapers must be paid at full letter rates.

Unanswered questions on hand will appear next week.

BRAHMA.

BY JAMES HUNGERFORD.

"The king is dead—long live the king!"

I firmly believe in Brahma—
He's the emblem of love, you know;
In my life's immaculate drama,
Still I say to the idols, "Go!"
For I live in the pure ideal,
Where only the truthful dwells;
When I find the forms unreal,
I burst through the crystalline shells.
For I firmly believe in Brahma—
He's the emblem of love, you know;
In my life's immaculate drama,
Still I say to the idols, "Go!"

You think you are first and only
In whose bosom the god has dwelt,
In a solitude never lonely,
Where the all of his life is felt,
But you thoroughly err forever,
Not only in fact but name;
For his shrine may change, but never
The god—he is ever the same.
So I firmly believe in Brahma—
He's the emblem of love, you know;
In my life's immaculate drama,
Still I say to the idols, "Go!"

For love is not only vernal,
But it lives in the winter time;
And the god is himself eternal,
From his death to his manhood's prime.
Yes, he lives throughout all the ages,
Tracing the past, indeed;
Still tear out the leaves as you read,
And most firmly believe in Brahma—
He's the emblem of love, you know;
In my life's immaculate drama,
Ever say to the idols, "Go!"

Cecil's Deceit:

OR,
THE DIAMOND LEGACY.BY MRS. JENNIE D. BURTON.
AUTHOR OF "ADRIA, THE ADOPTEE," "THE MYSTERY OF ELLSFORD GRANGE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MAIDEN'S DOUBTS.

ONCE every day, sometimes twice, Cecil visited Eve in what was at once her sick room and her prison.

In the short time she could daily devote to the work, she had rendered the room more habitable. She swept out the thick coating of dust which enveloped floor and furniture in a gray mantle, and brushed the cobwebs from the walls. Then she parted the thick ivy vines from the casements, not tearing them away entirely, but enough to let the sunshine drive through in golden flecks, and at night the moonrays crept tremulously in, marking the shape of the diamond pane in weird, white light.

Eve was very ill. She had no knowledge of the time as it dragged away; hours seemed days, and again, when the fever fancies were pleasantly tinged, days seemed no more than hours.

She was not violently delirious at any time. From her unconscious murmurs when she seemed to be living over the past few months, Cecil learned of the struggles and sufferings which had worn down the tenderly nurtured girl.

She procured wine and jellies from the anteroom, and simple sedatives from the medicine-chest, which was kept in the household. As usual in cases of fever, Eve took no solid nourishment for days, but partook eagerly at all times of the cooling drinks with which Cecil kept her supplied.

The disease made rapid inroads upon her frame, already wasted by privation and over-work. Her long, slender hands were transparently white, and her thin face, when the flush died out of it, was but a pitiful reminder of her as she had been of old.

Meanwhile, preparations for the birth-night *fete* were being rapidly prosecuted. Orders for confectionery and foreign fruits were sent to the city, and the whole domestic force at Frampton Place were busied in working up the ample store of materials provided for the more substantial part of the repast.

Yet Olive, in whose honor all this was being done, wandered restlessly about the house, taking part in the tasks which devolved but not finding relief in them from the vague discontent which oppressed her. Now that she had committed herself, irrevocably as she thought, misgivings would arise lest in this important action she had permitted herself to decide hastily and unwisely. She freely admitted that subtle power which Victor knew so well how to wield. When with him she could find nothing in her promised fate to cause a regret for the freedom she must soon renounce. But, alone, doubts would steal into her mind, which were so intangible that she could fix them upon no actual word or look of his, but which impressed her with a distrust of him, which we know was too well founded.

Her uncle observed her restlessness, but ascribed it to the maiden modesty which yet shrank from the new, unfamiliar relation. But when Sophie Darnley came, in response to Cecil's invitation, and her lively presence failed to dispel Olive's *distrust* manner, he grew anxious lest she might be threatened with some bodily ailment.

She was passing the library one morning when he was there alone. He called to her, and she went in with the smile she had always ready for him, but lacking the buoyancy of expression she had formerly worn.

"What a somber face you carry, Olive, dear," said he, drawing her down by his side and passing his hand affectionately over her dusky hair. "Were I in Victor's place I would remonstrate with such a sorrowful-visaged fiancée. Seriously, I have been distressing myself with fears for your health. Much as I love my little girl and dread to part with her, I have been thinking that it may be best to hasten a certain ceremony and send her South before the fall frosts set in. That tropical nature of yours will revive amid the orange blooms of the softer climate."

"But I am in no haste to leave you, uncle. There is no place so dear to me as here, where I have passed so many happy years, and I can not bear to think of parting from you who have always filled a father's place toward me."

"Then, my dear, don't let the roses dim in your cheeks, or I shall overcome my own selfishness and send you away despite of yourself. What troubles you, Olive? I can not be contented while I see you dissatisfied. Confess to me as you used to do when a little child, oppressed by the weight of repented misdeeds."

He spoke half-bantering, but with a shade of real concern, which she did not fail to detect.

"I have been thoughtless, indeed, to cause you anxiety," she said. "I have only been half-repenting the promise which will necessitate my leaving you some day."

"Why, what notion is this, Olive? You've not been indulging in a lover's quarrel, I hope?"

"Oh, no! But, uncle, I fear sometimes that I don't love Victor as I ought. I can not fancy myself much disappointed by circumstances should yet break the tie between us. I half wish you would play the tyrannical guardian and forbid the bans."

He dropped his playful tone, but spoke very gently.

"You are no longer a child, Olive; and in this matter your own free will must decide."

"Ah, uncle, I fear that I do not know my own mind!"

"Dismiss such silly fancies, my dear. Love is not like the gourd which sprung up in a single night. It is more like the oak which grows and strengthens in the dew and the sunshine, and gains hardihood from the wind and storm."

He drew the simile from his own experience. Since the time he had planned for his marriage, when Eve Collingsbrooke was yet in her childhood, there had grown up a part of himself the strong love he had since lavished upon his wife, believing her the realization of the ideal bride he had cherished in his heart through all the years of their long betrothal.

He did not pause to think that while his nature received an impression as a picture grows upon canvas, line after line and shade upon shade, another might be better typified by the photographer's art, which takes in a perfect semblance of the whole upon the instant.

Have you any reason for regretting the choice you have made, Olive?"

"None, other than I have said."

"Then, my dear, do not court discontent by dwelling on the dark side of a possibility. Don't coax up girlish fancies which you will regret having indulged. Ah! there is Victor himself. I think I can safely trust him to put to flight those shadowy doubts."

As he spoke Victor entered, and Mr. Frampton passed out, leaving the betrothed pair together.

"What is it, Olive? Certainly, no doubt of me has entered your mind," he said, taking the place by her side which Mr. Frampton had just vacated.

"Not of you, but of myself," she answered. "I fear I do not love you as I should, Victor; not with the entire devotion I should wish to give my husband."

"That will come hereafter, Olive. I am quite content to know that you will accord it to me in the future. You must, for love begets love, and mine is so strong and true that it will win."

So Olive's scruples were reasoned away, and her birthday came, so bright that it seemed a happy foreshadowing of the life which lay beyond it.

They had expected Richard Holstead's return in time to participate in the gayeties of the birth-night *fete*; but when the day faded into the purple dusk of twilight, and he had not arrived, expectation of his presence was relinquished.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE UNSEEN HAND THAT SMITES.

It was scarcely dusk when Frampton House threw out the glare of its myriad lights.

The rooms, faultless in the entire newness of their finish and furnishing, were redolent with the scent of summer flowers. A neighboring greenery had been rifled of its rarest blossoms, and these mingled with the garden blooms, with an exquisite taste as regarded the blending of colors, formed the most delightful of decorations.

Chains of snowy lace over others of bright-plumaged birds that hung poised with outspread wings, as if prepared to take ready flight. A few rare paintings upon the walls broke their satiny smoothness with a sense of rest to the eye. Great branching chandeliers, all aglitter with silver and crystal, caught up and reflected, over and over again, the gleam of the waxen tapers they upheld. Marbles gleamed whitely from unexpected niches, and bronzes—ugly as I have ever thought them—caught a glow of life from the radiance about them; and gold-framed mirrors on every side reproduced the scene in apparently endless vista.

Mr. Frampton had spared no expense in any detail, and Cecil's sensuous tastes revelled in the beauties provided for her. Had Victor never penetrated this quiet, easy life which spread itself invitingly before her, she would have buried all sense of remorse and regret in the enjoyment of the luxuries it secured to her. Or, had he come tempting her only with the remembrance of what had been between them, she would have remained strong in her determination of loyalty to her husband.

It was the knowledge that his powerful will would not recognize her influence and stoop to plead with her; the bitterness of seeing him apparently well satisfied in winning another; the fear of losing him forever, that broke down the bonds of conditional selfishness with that stronger selfishness—woman's intense jealousy.

And now every other consideration was swept away before her willing idolatry of the man.

They kept orthodox hours in Frampton, notwithstanding its proximity to the city, and consequent subjection to the demoralizing influences of fashionable example. At eight the carriages began to arrive, and at ten the whole assembly of invited guests moved within the light and fragrance of the reception-rooms.

Cecil, affable and an acknowledged favorite, played her part of hostess with graceful ease. Her dress was rich and *à la mode*, but exquisitely becoming, as indeed was every thing she wore; black lace over snowy silk, with heavy, black lace around her neck and arms, but not concealing their rounded, delicate contour. Her hair was caught up in loose, waving masses, interwoven with the same glittering gems that sparkled at her throat and wrists.

Wonderfully well did the Collingsbrooke diamonds set upon her, and many an envying eye did they attract among the feminine portion of the guests. Could they have known all the deceit and wearing anxiety borne beneath that fair exterior, would they still have thought the result sufficient for the sacrifice made to secure it?

Did any remembrance haunt Cecil, as she caught glimpses of her radiant self in the surrounding mirrors, of that wasted figure and pallid, deathlike face—the wreck of the gentle girl whose name and place in life she had usurped? Both of them sheltered by the same roof, the one courted, flattered, lacking nothing wealth or affection could

supply; the other neglected, suffering, dying for aught she could know.

Perhaps! At the last moment previous to her appearance below, she had stolen away in her rich dress with the glitter of the jewels she unlawfully possessed about her, for a brief visit to the sufferer. Some dread had weighed upon her all that day. A fear perhaps that Eve might arouse to baffle her in the very height of her stolen position.

Little need of fearing the spark of vitality which lingered yet in that senseless form. Eve lay so motionless that the other bent over her in affright, thinking her really dead; but the faint respiration, the almost imperceptible flutter of the pulse, reassured her. The disease had reached its most critical point, a crisis would be passed during the night.

Cecil went down all smiles to meet the arriving guests, the apparent incarnation of happiness, knowing that all along the life she had wronged was struggling feebly against the fearful power of death.

It was nearing midnight, and the gayety was at its height, when she threaded her way through the crowd and stepped unperceived out through one of the open windows. Some merry young couples were promenading the verandas, but she avoided these, and gathering her dainty garments close about her, sped swiftly and silently down the gravelled pathway.

At a little distance she encountered Victor, consoling himself during the solitary moments of waiting by smoking beneath the starlight. He threw away his cigar as she approached.

"Will you always doubt me, Cecil?" he demanded, as he paced slowly by her side in the shadow of the bordering foliage. "Did it need new evidence to convince you of my truth? Certainly, you have it now that I have stolen away from my fiancée, on the night which announces our betrothal, to swear my firm allegiance to you only, and my intention of using her only as a stepping-stone to fortune."

"I don't doubt you, Victor; but I have come to make one more appeal. Don't persist in the course you have set yourself to follow. Let us forget every thing for each other before we forfeit the happiness which may yet be ours. Don't let us wait for Fate to dash the wine of life from our lips through our dallying over it."

"You are speaking strangely, Cecil. Surely, you know me well enough to believe that I am not easily swayed from a purpose. I credited you with more strength of mind than to take up with improbable forebodings."

"But if you are convinced that it is no simple fancy, Victor? If you knew me threatened by an imminent danger?"

"You know you could rely upon me. But there is no danger until we have brought it down upon ourselves."

"Perhaps none for you. But you know what unstable ground I rest upon, what I risked to bear the name I shall soon dis-honor."

"The risk was not as great as you told it to me. The girl was dead, and you so exactly her counterpart that those who had known you both would scarcely have detected the deception. And you have all necessary proofs in your own hands. What can you fear, since there is no one in the wide world except myself who could betray you?"

"Listen, Victor. I told you the truth of what I believed regarding Eve Collingsbrooke's death, but it was a mistake after all. I did not know until less than a fortnight ago she came to me."

She paused. It was in her mind to tell him all the truth. But she hesitated, knowing that the impression of impending evil which weighed upon her would fade away to his matter-of-fact view, should he know Eve's present helplessness.

"Well," he questioned, with manifest anxiety. "She came to you here, you say?"

"Yes, she came to me, but with no ill-will or purpose of revenge. Yet she asked of me what it will be an impossibility to perform. She demanded only the restitution of the diamonds which you know are rightfully hers. I put her off for the time, but the reprieve I gained has almost expired. Exposure threatens me; and you, Victor, must save me from the consequences."

"Why not give her the jewels?" he asked. "They will not balance against Olive's fortune and your marriage settlements. Rid yourself of her importunities when you can do it at so easy a rate, and we will compass our end undisturbed."

"I dare not. Their absence would be almost immediately discovered, and a false pretext would not account for their disappearance."

"Simulate a burglary," he suggested. "No, for they would be traced to her with little difficulty, and the explanation we wish to avoid be thus precipitated. And besides, with the diamonds in my possession, we need fear no evil in the future should all else fail. They are certainties; the rest we must trust to chance."

"Then you must find means to evade her demand. If this troublesome counterpart of yours has no influential friends to back her, I will find means to insure her silence until her disclosures can be of no moment to us. Leagued together we will not be thwarted by a single woman, Cecil."

She felt that it was useless to plead her cause further. She must give up to him in this as she felt she would ever do in all cases where it came to a contest of their two wills.

"She was kind to me once," she said, "and I would not like to have her subjected to the harsh measures you hint at. I shall endeavor to satisfy her for a time. Tell me once more that Olive is nothing to you, that I am every thing; it will give me patience to wait as well as courage to work."

"You are nervous to-night, Cecil, or you would not need the assurance. You have it though, freely. Olive is nothing more to me than the mere instrument to work out my will. I do not love her; you alone ever have or ever can sway me through that passion. I shall have no compunction when once my end is gained in leaving her for you. Are you satisfied now?"

"Only because it must be," she answered, in a low voice.

They had been walking back and forth along one of the principal paths intersecting the grounds, and had penetrated further now than at any previous turn. Neither of them saw a figure that started forward, and then checking its motion drew back into shadow as they retraced their steps.

It was Richard Holstead, who, delayed upon the way, had just arrived. He had paused a moment in the grounds to view the house with its windows all glaring Ar-

gus eyes, and listen to the soft strains of melody that were wafted out upon the night air. He had not observed their approach until Victor's concluding words caught his ear. He started to follow, but restrained himself, too honorable to commit a questionable act even for a good end; neither did he succeed in identifying D'Arno's companion.

They disappeared, and he slowly approached the house, pondering over the declaration he had accidentally overheard. He had not mistaken it, and he felt that some plot was in progress, which, if left to work, would terminate fatally for Olive's peace—Olive, the one woman he had loved, and whose image he had struggled vainly to uproot from his heart, was marked as the victim of some vile conspiracy.

The knowledge thrilled him, for it brought to him the two-fold conviction that he could be of use to her, and that she might not be irreparably lost to him.

Olive had entered fully into the spirit of the evening's entertainment. Sustained during the earlier hours by Victor's presence at her side, she had blushing received the open congratulations of the cordial, honest neighbors. Afterward she mingled freely with the guests, everywhere the center of a little coterie that came and went and changed but still clustered around her.

It was late when Sophie Darnley penetrated the circle and drew her away to a secluded corner.

"I'm going to give Olive a moment's peace," she asserted, when a demur arose. "You incorrigible cormorants would devour her alive, I verily believe. Come, Olive, withdraw the light of your countenance from their too appreciative spirits."

"Now, then," she continued, when they stood apart from the throng. "I dare say you have been priding yourself upon exclusiveness as a prospective bride, but I'm going to give you a Roland for an Oliver. Walter and I have just concluded to sink the memory of standing feuds in the sea of future conjugal bliss."

"And you thought to surprise me?" Olive smiled. "As though that consummation had not been the expectation of the neighborhood for months! I am sincerely glad, Sophie, and congratulate you with all my heart."

"Well, then, since you are not surprised, no more am I," Sophie rattled on. "I've felt it in my bones, as the sea-captain said when the storm broke, which his rheumatic joints predicted. Not that I'm of such a mercurial disposition, but you see, Walter has persecuted me so long I'm obliged to take him at last in pure self-defense."

"What martyrdom!" Olive ejaculated in mock horror.

Sophie soon drifted away from the interesting subject, to pass remarks upon the shifting figures in the scene before them.

"Mrs. Frampton is the cynosure of all eyes, and no wonder—she is inimitable. Almost too richly dressed, I should say, for a hostess; but she bears it well."

"There is Mr. Holstead, too; I did not know he was here. What a prince among men he looks when compared with insignificant little Percy Gray by his side. Really, if Walter had been less importunate I think I should have been tempted to lay siege to the fortress of Mr. Holstead's affections."

"What can all your uncle, Olive? He has left the room, looking wretchedly ill; and there, Doctor Storms is following him. They have not been observed by the company; now, Mr. Holstead, too, has gone quietly out. What can it mean?"

"Stay here, and see that no alarm is unnecessarily given. I will ascertain if any thing has happened uncle Hugh."

Olive slipped away in search of Mr. Frampton. In the corridor without his room she was met by Richard Holstead.

"What is it?" she asked, anxiously.

"Nothing to cause you alarm, I hope. Mr. Frampton is suffering from an attack of vertigo, which I think will soon pass. Don't let those below suffer apprehension."

"May I see him? He is not subject to sudden illness."

He let her pass into the room. Mr. Frampton sat in an easy-chair, looking shaken and ill, but he smiled at her reassuringly.

"Is it you, Olive? I grew dizzy and faint but am recovering now. Go back to the company, child, and excuse my absence if it is noted."

She glanced appealingly toward Doctor Storms, but he seconded her uncle's command, adding:

"It is but a trivial matter, but he'll do better to remain quiet. Here, Holstead, take Miss Tremaine down again."

With her fears allayed, Olive returned to the guests. But when these had at last departed and the house grew dark and still, it was ascertained that, instead of the slight affection passing, he had grown rapidly worse.

In a word, he was stricken down with the fever which, unknown to him, had been brought within his walls.

Had it made an end of one victim to fasten itself in its exultant triumph upon another? Cecil shuddered when the nature of her husband's illness was made known to her.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 107.)

Tracked to Death:

OR,
THE LAST SHOT.BY CAPT. MAYNE REID,
AUTHOR OF "HELPLESS HAND," "LOVE RANCHO,"
"SCALP HUNTERS," "WHITE CHIEF," ETC.

CHAPTER LIII.

WAITING THE WORD.

WHILE Colonel Armstrong and his half-dozen fellow colonists were enjoying themselves in the refectory of the ancient mansion, a band of men, about three times their number, might have been seen at less than half a mile's distance from the place, though for a time not moving any nearer to it. They were halted in a circular spot of glade-ground, one-half its circumference inclosed by a cliff, the other shut in by a wood, whose heavy timber, thick, dark selvidge, appeared almost as impassable as the facade of rugged rock opposite to it. They were all horsemen, though not at the moment in their saddles. They were standing or moving over the open ground of the glade, most of them collected in a group near its center; while the animals were tied here and there to the trees. Only by the bridles were these attached, and they still carried their saddles, with such caparison as belonged to them, showing that their riders had no intention to encamp on that spot, though it

was night and the hour a late one. They were evidently using it but as a temporary stopping-place. They even seemed impatient to part from it, and were but waiting the word from one having authority to give it. Such a one there was; a man of large stature, who stood in the midst of the central group, nearly the head higher than any of those around him. He, too, appeared to be waiting for some one—perhaps a scout sent out to reconnoiter.

It was clearly something of this kind that kept them at rest; for every now and then the eyes of the colossal chief, as also of the others, were directed toward the timber's edge, as if expecting some one to appear upon it.

Before reaching the place where they now were, they had ridden a long way—almost the distance of a day's journey. By early daybreak of that morning they had started from a camp on Brady's Creek, one of the lesser influents of the Colorado. It was the same creek, and the same camp under pecan-trees, already mentioned as that to which the Indians had retired after watching Colonel Armstrong's emigrant-train, up the San Saba valley, and witnessing its safe arrival at the ancient Mission. And it was the same band of prairie pirates that was now *en bivouac* within less than half a mile of its walls.

They had made speed across the wide stretch of upland plain stretching between the two chief rivers, at this point nearly twenty miles apart. From it they had descended into the San Saba bottom, down a sloping break in the bluff escarpment, passed through the valley itself in a transverse direction, and crossed the river at the same place where Colonel Armstrong's wagon-train had gone over—the only ford available without ferry-boats for nigh twenty miles. It was at this crossing-place the impatient Charles Clancy, with his four fellow-travelers, arrived about an hour afterward; and where, having made halt, they determined to remain until morning.

It was now near midnight; and while Clancy, Woodley, Heywood, and Harkness, with Jupiter and the deer-hound, were all lying at full stretch under the canopy of a spreading tree, these prairie pirates were standing, ten miles off, in an open glade, with the full moon shining down upon their plumes and painted faces. Though at rest and apparently inactive, any one seeing them at that moment could not have avoided suspecting them of some sinister purpose. And any one near enough to hear the muttered words passing among them might have foreseen that the conviviality of Colonel Armstrong and his guests was in danger of being rudely interrupted.

The forecast would have been still easier on sight of a man who soon after arrived in their midst, coming from the direction of the Mission. He came skulking under the shadow of the trees; but as he entered the open ground of the glade and the moonlight fell upon his face it could be recognized as that of Dupre's doubted servant, Fernand.

In less than ten minutes after passing through the breach in the broken wall, the half-Spaniard, half-Indian made his appearance among those who seemed of purer Indian blood.

On his arrival they crowded eagerly around him, as if expecting some intelligence of interest to all.

This he imparted, but only in *sotto voce*, to their leader. Whatever its nature, it caused the latter to issue an order for instant departure from the place.

In less than five minutes after, they were all on horseback and in motion, moving toward the Mission building.

Fernand alone kept on foot, heading the cavalcade, and gliding in advance of it with the agility of a skunk, evidently acting as its guide.

One who could have witnessed the advance of that plumed cohort—who could have seen their savage faces, grim and ghost-like under their horrid heraldry of paint—who was told where they were going, and with what intent—would have sent up to Heaven a fervent prayer for the safety of Colonel Armstrong and his fellow-colonists.

If still further informed—made more intimately acquainted with the men who composed that band of freebooters—the prayer would have ended with the reflection:

"Heaven help Colonel Armstrong's daughters! If God does not guard, a fearful fate is before them—a destiny worse than death!"

CHAPTER LIV.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

WHILE the fiendlike band was making approach to the Mission building, Colonel Armstrong and his friends were still seated around the dinner-table, drinking wine, smoking cigars and conversing. The colonel himself, being of Scotch ancestry, had a penchant for whisky-punch, and a tumbler of this beverage was before him; his glass had been twice emptied and refilled, and was near to being empty again.

The old soldier was in high spirits, as who would not after drinking thus freely of the most exhilarating tipple—in a sanitary point of view, the safest—in the world.

He had other thoughts to elate him. His leaving Mississippi had been a good move. So far things had gone well; and for the future every thing wore a promising aspect. His colonizing scheme, conjointly with the young Creole planter, looked in every way as if it could not fail to have a successful issue. The star of the Armstrongs, which of late years had been waning, was again beginning to show bright. It would, perhaps, ascend higher, and shine more conspicuously than ever.

There was but one cloud to darken the horizon of his hopes. This was the condition of his elder daughter. He could not help observing the somber melancholy that had settled over her spirit, for it was almost constantly visible upon her brow. Indeed, he knew all about it, even to its cause. For she had confessed every thing, in answer to his parental solicitation. She had, moreover, frankly made known to him the circumstances of her clandestine correspondence, even to the contents of that letter intercepted by the assassin. For Colonel Armstrong and his daughters, in common with the other colonists, still believed Charles Clancy to be dead, and Richard Darke his murderer.

His daughter's frank confession caused Colonel Armstrong pain, with some self-reproach. It was his own aristocratic pride—or, perhaps, rather his cupidity—that had stood in the way of an open and honorable courtship between her and her lover. Had Clancy's addresses been permitted, the end might have been less disastrous. It could not have been more.

So the fond father thought, as, day by

day, he saw his daughter depressed in spirit, also declining in health. She seemed, as she had said to her sister and herself, believed, destined for an early tomb. In truth, she appeared to be fast hastening to it.

At first her father had hopes that the change to new scenes in Texas might do something to fling oblivion over the past, and bring peace back to her mind, if not her former buoyancy of spirit. He had also a hope that another love might take the place of the lost one. For this reason was he giving every opportunity of paying his addresses to the young surgeon, Wharton, as well as to several other aspirants of good condition belonging to the colonist band.

All in vain; and Colonel Armstrong soon began to see it. It might have been different had the blighted heart been that of his younger daughter, Jessie. With her the Spanish proverb, "un clavo suena otro clavo," might have had a meaning. Not so with Helen. No second love passion could ever thrive, or have existence, in her heart. The first was still living, still burning, there; though its object no longer lived to nourish or keep it warm.

Helen Armstrong was of a nature, alas! too rare among her sex—a woman of one love. That won, she would keep it all her life. If lost, she would not, could not, love again. Like an eagle's mate, deprived of her proud lord, she would prefer to live her after-life in lone solitude or die.

Her father, perceiving this, was sometimes sad. Fortunately for him, there was a good balance on the other side—many circumstances to compensate and cheer him. The joy of his other child, Jessie; her exuberance of spirits; the hopes that seemed to halo her young life, were flung over the future of all. And then, there were the excitement attendant on the industries of the hour, the cares of the cotton husbandry, with speculations as to the success of the crop—these, and a hundred other pleasant things, kept Colonel Armstrong from dwelling either often or long on thoughts that could but distress. There was nothing to distress him on that night as he sat at the head of the dining table in the old Mission refectory. With the glass of steaming punch before him, and a good cigar between his teeth, he was conversing with his guests, gay as the geyser.

They had ceased to talk of Dupre's suspected servant; and their conversation was now about sugar—discussing the point of whether the saccharine reed could be cultivated in the San Saba valley.

They all knew it could be grown there. The question was, whether it would pay. As on almost every other speculative subject, there was difference of opinion; some holding that it would answer well; others that it would not be worth cultivating. A bulky article, difficult of transport, and too far from shipping port.

While the discussion was going on, and just as it had reached its height, a new guest entered the room, who, without waiting for an invitation to speak, said six words that at once put an end to the conversation about sugar.

The words were:

"Gentlemen! there are Indians about!"

CHAPTER LV.

FALSE SECURITY.

He who had made the announcement was one of Colonel Armstrong's fellow-colonists; though not one who would have been invited to the private table, or even to a glass of wine after dinner. He was of the class of common settlers, with the air of a rough backwoodsman, and wearing the costume of a hunter.

He had stepped into the room unannounced, confident that the report he carried would hold him free from being considered an intruder.

And it did. On the moment of his pronouncing the word "Indians," all around the table started to their feet, and stood waiting, breathlessly expectant of what he had further to say.

Colonel Armstrong alone spoke; the old soldier showing the presence of mind befitting an occasion of alarm.

"Indians about! What reason have you for thinking so, Hawkins?"

Hawkins was the name of the man in the buck-skin hunting-shirt, who had so abruptly introduced himself.

"The best of reasons, colonel. I've seen 'em myself."

"Seen them yourself? Where?"

"Well, Cris Tucker and I started out this mornin' at an early hour, intendin' to make a good day's hunt of it. We took down the river bottom to the crossing-place. We there crossed over to the farther bank, because we'd noticed plenty of deer on that side the day we all came up. We found the animals again, and shot three does and a buck. In followin' them we got close to the bluffs, where we saw an easy path through a sort of gully that sloped up to the upper plain. Cris believed we might find buffalo there; and so we strung our venison on a tree and kept on up the gully."

"When we reached the plain above we struck out upon it, and went on about six or seven miles, but saw no buffalo or any other game. What we did see was something to give us a scare. While we were restin' by the side of one o' them prairie groves we got sight of a party of men, all mounted. They looked at first as if they were comin' straight toward the grove in which we'd halted. We were both pretty bad scared; but just then they turned off a little, and passed the place—not very near, but near enough for us to see that they were Indians. We could see their feathers and painted faces plain enough as the sun shined on them. As we didn't want to get any closer, we kept under cover and let them pass on."

"When they were clean out o' sight we started for home, keeping a sharp look-out not to come across them again."

"While riding back over the upper plain we didn't see any thing more of them, not till we got to the crossing of the river below. But there, in the mud, where the bank slopes down to the water's edge, were the tracks of at least twenty horses, fresh made. It was moonlight, still we were able to tell that. We could tell, too, they were mounted animals, and could be no other than them ridden by Indians. For certainly they were the same party as passed us on the upper plain."

"After getting to this side the stream we again looked for the tracks. There were they, sure enough, leadin' up out of the river bed onto the bank. Then they turned in this direction, and we traced 'em all along the river edge, up the bottom, till we could n't make them out any longer, as just then the moon went under a cloud. We lost

them about a mile below the Mission here. Where the savages went afterward, or where they are now, 'tain't possible for me to tell. All I've got to say is, what I've said already: there are Indians about."

The information thus imparted produced a startling effect on the minds of the assembled planters; all of them, to a man, becoming suddenly apprehensive of danger. All the more, from its being their first alarm of the kind. While traveling through Eastern Texas, where the settlements are thick and of somewhat old standing, Indians had not even been talked of. There was no chance of seeing any there. Only after drawing nigh to the Colorado were the Indians likely to be encountered, though it did not necessarily follow that the encounter should be hostile. On the contrary, it ought to be friendly; since a treaty of peace had for some time been existing between the Comanches and Texans.

For all this, Colonel Armstrong, being an old Indian-fighter, and thoroughly acquainted with the character of the red-men, both in war and peace, had not relied altogether on their pacific promises. He knew that such contracts only bind the savage so long as they seem convenient to him, to be broken whenever they become irksome. Moreover, a rumor had reached the emigrants, that, although the great Comanche nation was itself keeping the treaty, there were several small bands of independent tribes—Lipans and Seminoles—accustomed to make intermittent "marauds" upon the frontier settlements, chiefly for stealing horses, or any thing else that chanced to fall in their way.

For this reason, after entering the territory where such marauders might possibly be encountered, the old campaigner had conducted his train as if passing through an enemy's country. The wagons had been regularly corraled, and night guards kept—both camp sentries and pickets.

These rules had been observed up to the moment of their arrival at their destination. Then, as the people got settled down in their respective domicils, and nothing had been hitherto heard of Indians in that district of country, the discipline had been relaxed—in fact, almost abandoned. The colonists, in all numbering over fifty men, with the usual proportion of women and children—to say nothing of the two or three hundred negro slaves—deemed themselves strong enough to repel any ordinary assault from savages. They now felt themselves at home; and, with the confidence thus inspired, they had ceased to think about being molested either by red-skins or any other enemies.

It was for this reason that the apparently eccentric movements of Dupre's half-breed servant, observed by the young surgeon, had failed to make more than a passing impression on the guests around Colonel Armstrong's table. True, the man's conduct was mysterious, and called for an explanation; which, then, no one of the party had been able to give.

Now, after the communication made by the hunter, it presented a more serious aspect, and was, in truth, but too intelligible. Every one in the room leaped to the conclusion that the half-breed inside the house was in secret correspondence with full-blooded Indians outside; and that some scheme was on foot, whether of pilfering or bold plunder was a question that could not be determined.

The thought of either was sufficient to excite Colonel Armstrong's guests, if not terribly alarm them; and they had all risen to their feet, ready to take action.

The old soldier was the first to direct it, saying:

"Bring your half-breed in, Dupre. Let us see what he has to say for himself."

"Tell Fernand to come here!" exclaimed the young planter, the command being given to one of the negro boys who waited on the table. "Tell him to come instantly!"

The waiter went off to execute the order, and was gone several minutes.

During the interval, they continued to discuss the circumstances that had so suddenly turned up; questioning the hunter Hawkins, and receiving from him some further details of what he and his comrade had seen, as also what they believed or conjectured.

Whatever of new light was thus thrown upon the subject only excited them the more, increasing their apprehensions.

These were still further intensified when the darky returned into the dining-room with the announcement that Fernand could not be found!

CHAPTER LVI.

FERNAND NOT A FAVORITE.

WHILE Colonel Armstrong and his guests were thus agitated inside the Mission building, at the same instant of time his daughters, outside, were stirred by emotions equally vivid.

It was shortly after the suspected servant had passed them with stealthy tread and disappeared through the opening in the wall. On seeing him steal past, their first feeling had been one of curious surprise, which soon gave place to grave imaginings. These were expressed in words of mutual interrogation.

"What on earth is that fellow after?" asked Helen, whose speech came first.

"What, indeed?" echoed Jessie.

"A question you, Jessie, should be better able to answer than I. He is the trusted servant of your Louis; and surely Dupre must have told you all about him?"

"Not a word has he. He knows that I don't like the man, and never did from the first. I've intimated as much to my Louis, as you call him—more than once."

"That ought to have got the fellow his discharge. Dupre will surely not keep him when he knows it is disagreeable to him."

"Well, perhaps he would not if I were to put it in that way. I haven't done so as yet. I only hinted that for a confidential servant Fernand was not altogether to my liking; especially to be made so much of as Louis seems to make of him. You know, dear Helen, that my future lord and master is of a very generous and trusting nature, far too much so for some of the people now around him. Louis has been brought up like all Creoles, without thought for the morrow; perhaps a little too fond of pleasure, though not without plenty of ambition. A sprinkling of Yankee cuteness wouldn't do him a bit of harm. As for this Fernand, he has intimated himself into Louis' confidence in some way that appears quite mysterious. As you know, it puzzles our father; though he has said nothing about it. So far he has been satisfied, because Fernand has proved very capable, and useful to them in their affairs. It appears he knows all about this country, having been

out in it before. He is very subservient, both to father and Louis; which father don't like, I know. For my part, I'm puzzled about the whole matter, and can't make out what he's after now."

Such was the conclusion of Jessie's somewhat prolonged response to her sister's searching interrogatory.

"I confess to a like quandary," rejoined the elder sister. "Fernand's conduct, all along, but more especially Dupre's behavior to him, quite mystifies me, as I think it does most of our people. Mr. Wharton, who is a sensible sort of person, in his way, does not hesitate to say that Louis acts very imprudently in trusting him. That, however, is all mere suspicion, and might arise from looking at Fernand's face. I don't think any one could scrutinize his countenance without coming to the conclusion that it belongs to a villain—one capable of almost any crime. There is something so animal-like about his eyes—that Spanish expression suggesting the stiletto, with a readiness to make use of it. Like yourself, I had a bad opinion of him from the first, judging him only by his looks. Now, if I mistake not, we have proof of guilt in his actions, or are soon likely to have. From the way he went past he is evidently on some errand not honest. Can you give any guess as to what it is?"

"I? Not the slightest."

"Can it be theft, think you? Is there any thing he could be carrying away from the house, with the intention of secreting it outside? Some of Dupre's gold for instance, or the pretty jewels he has given you?"

"My jewels! No; they are safe in their case; locked up in my room, too, of which I've here got the key. As for Louis's gold, he has none. I know that. All the money he possesses—more than fifty thousand dollars, I believe—is in silver. I wondered at his bringing it out here in that heavy shape, for it made a whole wagon-load of itself. He told me the reason, however. It appears that, among Indians and men trading upon the Texas borders, gold is not held in such esteem as silver is."

"It can scarcely be silver Fernand is stealing out, if it's theft he's engaged in. He would look more loaded, and could not move so lightly. He did not appear to be carrying any thing, did he?"

"I saw nothing. He was skipping along like a grasshopper."

"Rather say gliding like a snake. I never saw a man whose motion more resembled the devil in serpent shape—except one."

The thought of that one, who was Richard Danke, caused Helen Armstrong to suspend speech, at the same time evoking a sigh from her bosom, given to the memory of another one—Charles Clancy.

"Shall we go back into the house?" asked Jessie.

"For what purpose?"

"To tell Louis of this we've seen; to warn him about Fernand."

"If we did, the warning would be unheeded. I fear your Louis will remain unconvinced of the treason of his trusted servant until something unpleasant occurs. After all, we ourselves have as yet only suspicions. I propose that we stay here a little longer, and see what comes of this stealthy promenade. In all probability the fellow will soon be back, and he is sure to enter again this way. By staying here and watching him we may find out what he's scheming after. Shall we wait for him, then? You're not afraid, Jessie?"

"I am a little, I confess. Do you know, Helen, this Fernand gives me the same sort of feeling I had when I used to meet that big fellow in the streets of Natchitoches. At times he looks at me just in the same way. And yet the two are so different."

"Well, since no harm came of your Natchitoches bogie, it's to be hoped there won't come any from this one. If you have any fear to remain here, let us go in. Only my curiosity is greatly stirred by the man's eccentric behavior. I'd like to know the end of it. If we don't discover any thing, it can do no harm to try. What say you? Shall we go or stay?"

"I'm not afraid now. You make me brave, Helen. Besides, we may discover something to benefit Louis, and therefore all of us."

"Then," said Helen, "let us stay."

CHAPTER LVII.

BORNE OFF.

HAVING resolved to await the coming back of Fernand, and watch his further movements, the sisters now bethought them of seeking a safer post of observation; one in which there would be less danger of being themselves seen.

It was to Helen the idea occurred.

"On his return," she said, "he might stray this way, and not go up by the center walk. We had better conceal ourselves a little more effectually. I wonder he didn't see us while passing out. No doubt he would have done so but for his looking so anxiously behind and going at such a rapid rate. Coming back he may not be so much hurried, and if he should discover us, there would be an end to our chances of getting satisfied about him. Where's the best place for us to play spy?"

The two looked in different directions, scanning the ground in search of the spot most appropriate for espionage.

There could be no difficulty in finding such a place. The shrubbery, long unpruned, grew luxuriantly everywhere, screening the facade of the garden wall all along its length.

They wanted to be where they could see without danger of being seen; where they could command a view both of the gap in the wall and the garden walk that led straight from it up to the rear of the Mission building.

And just such there was—a sort of arbor of evergreens, entwined with orchids, bigonias, and other climbing and parasitical plants. It was within less than a score of yards from where the wall was in ruins.

They knew of this shady retreat; had been in it before during daylight. Now, although the moon was shining brightly down upon the trees, its interior, arched over by the evergreens and thatched by the creepers, was in shadow—dark as a cavern. Once inside it, eye could not see them from without, even at only six feet of distance.

"The very place," whispered Helen, and they started toward it.

To reach the arbor they had to cross the main walk, of some width, and pass that point where the wall had been breached by some rude intruders—perhaps the savages who had, long years ago, made the Mission desolate. There the crumbling adobe scattered over the path formed an obstruc-

tion, rendering it necessary for them to step slowly and with care. The girls were doing this, going hand in hand for mutual guidance and support.

They had got opposite the gap, where the ground was open and unshaded by either trees or shrubbery. There, exposed to view, their white dresses floating lightly around them as they glided silently along, they might have been taken for sylphs, or wood-nymphs, moving under the moonlight.

To complete the silvan picture, it would seem almost necessary that there should be wood-demons near at hand.

And such in reality there were, or something that very closely resembled them. No satyrs could have shown in more grotesque shape or horrid guise than the forms that at this moment presented themselves to the view of the sylphlike sisters.

They had paused opposite the opening in the wall. Some instinct, perhaps curiosity, tempted them to take a look at the shadowy forest outside. And there, as if under the spell of an unaccountable fascination, they stood for a time gazing into its dark, mysterious depths.

They saw nothing save the coruscation of the fireflies, nor did they hear any thing but the usual voices of the Southern night, to which both had been from infancy accustomed. There might have been other sounds. If so, they were by these obscured, and, to the sisters, inaudible.

Their pause, although of scarcely twenty seconds duration, was all of this too long. Had they kept on into the arbor, they might have remained unseen, and, perhaps, escaped a terrible fate.

They were about moving onward toward it, when all at once the gap in the wall appeared to be closed up suddenly, as by magic. It was a dark mass that filled it; at first seeming compact, but soon scattering into distinct forms. They were men, though, to the eyes of the alarmed sisters, they looked like demons. No wonder they did, since on the American frontier the typical aspect of the devil himself is that of a plumed and painted Indian. And the men making way through the wall were plumed and painted Indians!

The startled girls had but time to give one wild cry—a shriek. Before either could utter a second, brawny arms had embraced them, serapes were thrown over their heads; and, half-smothered, they felt themselves lifted aloft and borne rapidly away!

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 97.)

The Red Mazeppa:

OR,

THE MADMAN OF THE PLAINS.

A STRANGE STORY OF THE TEXAN FRONTIER!

(THE RIGHT OF DRAMATIZATION RESERVED.)

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "OVERLAND KIT," "WOLF DEMON," "THE AGE OF SPADES," "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," ETC.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DISDAINING FORTUNE.

"What will I give?" asked the half-breed, looking with wonder written on his face at the wily Mexican. "What can I give?"

"That which all men crave in this world—ay, and all women, too—gold; the glittering metal which, wrung from mother earth, makes man a king among his fellows," replied Lope.

"Gold!" ejaculated the herdsman in wonder. "I have none."

"Oh, yes, you have!" cried Lope, quickly. "Say but the word and I will place in your gripe more golden ounces than your eyes have ever seen. Give unto you more broad acres than your feet can cover from sunset to sunset."

"To me, the poor herdsman?" the half-breed said, doubtfully.

"To you; now, the simple herdsman only, but confide yourself and fortunes to my care, and in the future you shall hold head up with the proudest don in Mexico. You are the heir to the richest estate from the great Staked Plain to the Mexican gulf."

"How can you prove that?"

"Simple enough. I have all the papers in my possession to prove your identity. I am the herdsman who rode with you on the milk-white mustang on the night when your father was slain."

"I am the only heir, then—but my sister?" asked the herdsman, suddenly.

"I have lost all traces of her," replied Lope, evasively.

"But are you sure that I can claim this vast estate that you speak of?" said the half-breed, doubtfully.

"With my aid, yes; without my aid, no. You see, I hold all the proofs in my hands. I alone of all the world have the power to give you your fortune or to hold it from you."

The herdsman looked at the Mexican for a moment in silence. Again Lope caught the peculiar gleam that flashed from the eyes of the half-breed; again he was puzzled. He could not understand the meaning of the look.

Then the herdsman spoke.

"You can give me my fortune?"

"Yes."

"Or hold it from me?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me the name of my father?"

"Not until you make a bargain," replied Lope, carelessly.

"It does not matter, I will find it out for myself," the half-breed said, slowly.

"Oh, the devil you will!" cried Lope, in astonishment. "Well, now let me tell you, my dear young friend, that you stand about as much chance of finding out what you wish to know, without my assistance, as you do of leveling the walls of Bandera's hacienda with a word."

"That might be possible if I spoke loud enough," the herdsman returned quietly, with another peculiar glance.

"You'll never be hung for your modesty, my gentle herdsman!" exclaimed Lope, in astonishment, and just a little annoyed at the coolness of the other.

"Nor you for your honesty," replied the other, tersely.

"Caramba! if we go on at this rate, we shall come to blows instead of to an understanding," Lope said, with an effort curbing down his rising temper.

"What understanding can we come to?" asked the herdsman, a blank look upon his face.

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Lope, impatiently.

"You're not such a simpleton as all that. You know well enough what I mean. I didn't bring you here for nothing. The

moment I saw your face I felt sure that you were the heir that I was in search of. I told you the story of your life. As I expected, you recognized it at once. Now, then, what will you give me if I put you in possession of your estate?"

"What do you want?"

"A good round price. I own," replied Lope, frankly. "Half of what I get for you. I am dealing more liberally with you than with the other party."

"The other party," interrupted the half-breed.

"Yes; your worthy uncle, who now holds the estate. The only terms that I would give him were, that he must make me his son-in-law, and thus in time give all the property to me."

"His son-in-law!" cried the half-breed, quickly, and a glance of fire shot from his dark eyes.

"Oh, cursed blunder!" muttered Lope between his teeth, as he noted the expression upon the face of the other. "Have I put him on the scent?"

The eyes of the half-breed were cast upon the ground in dreamy meditation.

"Yes; I made the offer to him in the city of Mexico some two months ago, just before I set out for the frontier," Lope added, carelessly.

"Ah, my estate is in the city of Mexico, then?" the herdsman said, raising his head and looking Lope full in the face with his brilliant black eyes.

"How in Satan's name did you guess that?" cried the Mexican in affected astonishment. "You have keen wits, I own; but the city of Mexico is large, and I defy you to find your estate there. Besides, even if you should discover it, you must come to me for the papers which alone can give it to you."

"I do not care for it," said the half-breed, sullenly and slowly.

"Not care for it?" cried Lope, in amazement.

"No. What can gold give me more than I have already," the half-breed said with true contempt for the refinements of civilization.

"Then you do not care to make a bargain with me?" Lope cried in a tone of disgust.

"No," and the herdsman rose to his feet. "You do not want the estate?"

"No," again the half-breed said.

"My friend, let me give you a word of advice at parting," Lope cried, contemptuously. "Just pull off the herdsman's yellow boots and go and join your barefooted red brothers on the prairie. There is more of the Indian than the white man in you."

The herdsman looked at the Mexican for a moment in silence, the peculiar gleam again in his eyes, and then, without a word, stalked through the door and disappeared.

"The fiends seize him!" cried Lope, in rising wrath. "A stolid, wooden-headed piece of clay. A dull ass, with not brains enough to seize the fortune which my hand can give him. I must make terms with Bandera, then. He must yield. I'll see him the first thing in the morning; proclaim that the heir is here and that I will reveal all to him unless he pays me well to keep silent. In the morning" and Lope rose and pulled the ends of his long mustache, thoughtfully.

"No, no; first to discover whether the girl be alive or dead. Now I remember, Bandera declared that she was dead—that I could not find her—the same thing; for, if she was in the flesh he would not have spoken so confidently. Can he have stumbled upon her by accident while I have been absent, and seized upon some opportunity to remove her from his path? It is possible. I recognized the boy at a glance. Why should his eyes be less keen than mine? I'll satisfy myself on that point at once. I'll seek the priest to whose care I confided the girl. If she lives, Bandera tremble, for I'll wrest the estate from you, even from your very teeth, though you hold it with a wolf-like grip! Now for bed and sleep."

The Mexican quitted the drinking-shop.

Hardly had the door closed behind him when from the inner room the ratlike visage of Diego appeared. No trace of sleep was upon the face of the keeper of the wine-shop, but there was a twinkle of low cunning in the beaklike black eyes.

"The Virgin save us, what have I heard?" cried the Mexican, in wonder. "Often have I heard my father tell the story of the attack on the hacienda of Bandera, and of the supposed death of all within the household. So, this strange herdsman is the nephew of Senor Ponce de Bandera and the heir to the estate?"

The Mexican stroked his chin for a moment in deep thought.

"This is a difficult business," he said, slowly, communing with himself. "If I go to Senor Ponce and tell him all that I have overheard, he will see at once that I know that this half-breed is a nephew of his. Of course he will not give up his property to the half-savage and this vagabond adventurer without a struggle. I shall be dragged into the mess, and the first thing I know, I shall wake up some fine morning with my throat cut!"

And the prudent Diego looked serious.

"Caramba!" he cried, after a moment's thought. "I have it! I will go to Senor Ponce and tell him just enough of what I have heard to put him on his guard

"I saw you pass when you rode into the river," the girl said, "and as I had previously seen those bold, bad men lying concealed in the bushes, I knew that they waited for a human prey; when I saw you, I guessed that it was for you that they lay in ambush."

"I reckon that that long feller thought that he had been sent for when you plugged him with your rifle," Crockett said.

"Those three men wronged me so terribly," the girl observed, with a mournful sigh.

"Wronged you?" Gilbert said, in astonishment; "you know them then?"

"Yes, few dwellers for leagues around but know of the White Indians and of their terrible deeds," the girl replied.

"I reckon I've got it for sure!" Crockett cried, suddenly. "Them skunks air the ones who tied you on the back of the wild hoss."

"Yes," the girl answered.

"What motive had they to commit such a terrible crime? Surely you could never have wronged them in any way."

"No; they were but the hands that executed another's will."

"And that other?" Gilbert questioned.

"You forget; I have before told you that I could not reveal who it was that placed me in such terrible peril."

"But the motive for such a fearful inhuman act?"

"To separate me from the man that I love," the girl said, slowly, her dark cheeks suffused with blushes.

"But who could wish to do that?"

"His father," she replied, in answer to the question of the Mustang.

"And because the son loves you, the father dooms you to such a terrible death?" Gilbert exclaimed, in great astonishment.

"Yes."

"And for the son's sake you will not reveal the name of your cruel enemy?"

"Yes."

"I'm sorry for it," cried Crockett, emphatically. "It would do my heart good far to tan the hide of such a pesky varmint as he must be. Jerusalem, I'd wallop him so that that wouldn't be any thing left of him but a grease-spot!"

"It must not be!" exclaimed the girl, quickly; "even now I am in search of the man that I love so well, to tell him that we must part forever."

"And just 'cos the old coon objects?" Crockett asked.

"Yes."

"Don't you do it; let the pesky old villain go to grass. Don't let your young affection run to seed in any such fashion. Stick to the man you love like a lean dog to a shin of beef. You're sure you're right, so go ahead!"

"Danger lurks in the air!" cried a deep voice, and a stalwart figure rose, phantom-like, from the gloom of the earth.

"Wake snakes an' come at me! myer's that ternal critter agin!" muttered Crockett, as he recognized the person of the madman.

The strange being was clad as usual in the garb of skins, and bore in his hand the knotted club.

The girl shrank closer to the side of the Mustang as the madman rose from the earth.

Dark as was the night, the glaring orbs of the maniac noticed the movement of the girl.

"Right! shrink from me!" he muttered, his eyes rolling in strange frenzy. "I am dangerous to you, dangerous to all who have eyes black as night—eyes such as *she* had when she dwelt on earth. That was long ago," he added, in a mournful tone and with a shake of the head. "Now she is a saint above—in that heaven that the Mission priest told me of when I was a little boy, playing around my mother's knee by the sunny banks of the Sego. She is an angel above—a white-robed messenger of peace with great golden wings and a shining halo of light playing around her temples, not like the earthly flame which sometimes crowns my head when I score the brutal, earth-painted warrior from his prey. She comes down in a flood of silver light and talks to me when I crouch like the panther amid the rocks of the barranca. She is an angel of love and peace, and yet she sometimes whispers in my ears that I have a mission of blood, that I must stain my hands crimson with human gore."

The hearers shuddered, despite their firm nerves, at the words of the hapless madman.

The maniac glared around him for a moment and then stepped noiselessly to the side of the Mustang, whose arm encircled the slender waist of the Indian girl.

"That is right," he muttered; "find protection in his strong arm. He is of another race; I can not harm him. She came to me last night. Before she has always bidden me to slay the murdering red wolves who claim the prairie as their own; but last night she whispered in my ear that I must have Mexican blood. She told me the name of the man that I must kill, how he looked, and where I should find him. The time will soon come, for I dreamed it all over last night. I must strike him amid the smoke of an Indian wigwam far off on the prairie. Strange! and when I killed him, her eyes looked at me out of his face."

The two Americans listened in wonder to the incoherent words of the singular being.

The madman strode suddenly over to Crockett. The hardy woodman, astonished at the action, retreated a pace and laid his hand upon his hunting-knife.

The maniac never noticed the threatening action, but placed his hand upon the shoulder of the borderer and peered intently into his face; then he bent his head down and whispered lowly and mysteriously into the ear of Crockett.

"Were you ever mad?" he said.

Crockett stared at the question.

"I reckon I never was—not as I know on," he replied, honestly.

"It is a terrible thing to be mad—terrible when the moments of sanity come, and you remember what you have done in your madness. I remember every thing—twenty years back. It is a dreadful thing to be mad for twenty years."

"Yes, I reckon so," Crockett said, dubiously, a cold shiver creeping over him as the ice-like face of the madman came close to his own.

"When we are mad, we hate those whom in sanity we love. What is this thing called the brain?" he questioned, suddenly.

"Why should we go mad? The soul can not be sick; why should the brain? Why should we think things other than they are? Question me, I can talk with you. My memory is good; I can tell you every thing that I have done for twenty years."

Tell you as well about the acts I have committed during my insane moments as of those when I have been in full possession of my reason. I can't understand it. Now, for the moment, I am sane. I would not harm a hair of yonder child's head for the world. Even the Indian chief, the White Mustang, I would not harm, for there is something in his eyes which calls back to me one whom I have loved and lost. But the very instant the madness comes back to me, I crave the blood of the Indian chief and of this girl. The chief I shall kill—I know it—I feel it; but this poor girl—Heaven grant that she escape me! Let her avoid me, for in my madness I shall kill her."

He leaned his head down heavily upon the shoulder of Crockett, much to the borderer's dismay, for stout-hearted Crockett feared the terrible madman.

"Hush!" cried the latter, raising his head suddenly and glaring around him, "do you not hear?"

"What?" asked Crockett, who could not distinguish a sound.

"The unshod hoofs of the Indian Mustangs striking on the prairie. The Comanches are in the saddle and they ride to death. Warn them at Dhanis that the Mexican moon is rising. A thousand strong, the red avalanche sweeps over the prairie. Blood will flow like spring rain. Be warned!"

And then the madman glided away in the gloom.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE STRICKEN MAN.

GIRALDA, after leaving her lover, proceeded at once to the hacienda; wrapped in the dark cloak, she glided swiftly over the ground.

Already she had passed over half the distance between the place of meeting and the hacienda, when the sounds of the attack of the outlaws upon the American rung out shrilly on the night-air.

Giralda stopped in alarm. She guessed at once that the sounds boded danger to her lover.

"Oh, Holy Mother, shield him from harm!" she murmured, through white lips. The noise of the contest continued. The rifle-shot broke upon the stillness of the night.

Giralda could restrain her feelings no longer.

"They are killing him!" she murmured, in despair. "I will return; if not to save, at least to die with him!"

But as she turned to retrace her steps, a dark figure rose from the bushes by her side and stayed her.

"Giralda!" cried a deep voice, and the girl at once recognized that the figure that barred her onward course was her father's.

"Father," she murmured.

"Disobedient girl! can you look that father in the face?" Bandera asked, sternly.

"Let me go," she cried, vainly endeavoring to escape from the grasp of iron that detained her.

"Whether would you go? To where yonder night-brawlers affront heaven's peace with their acts of violence?" the father demanded.

"They are killing him! Oh, father, have mercy and let me go to his aid!" she implored.

"Think you that you can save your accursed lover from the fate he so richly deserves? By Heaven, I can almost find it in my heart to strike you to my feet for daring to beg mercy for this accursed heretic!" cried Bandera, fiercely.

"Strike!" cried Giralda, in desperation; "as well bruise my flesh as break my heart!"

Bandera gazed at his daughter for a moment in silence. He fully realized that in her his own iron will lived again.

"Home with you at once!" he cried.

Giralda shut her white teeth together and made a last desperate effort to break the grasp of steel which imprisoned her wrist.

Vain effort.

Bandera resolutely placed his arm around her waist and forced her along toward the hacienda.

The sounds of violence had ceased and the stillness of night again reigned supreme.

At the hacienda the father forced Giralda within the gateway.

"To your room!" he cried, fiercely.

Giralda turned in defiance.

"He has escaped! do you hear? He has escaped! Go now and you will find your hired ruffians bleeding on the prairie, stricken there by his strong arm. Do your worst; you may bruise my wrist—you may break my heart, but you will never conquer my love for the Mustang!"

And with this bold defiance, Giralda disappeared.

"I will conquer her, though I break heart, life, all, in the effort!" Bandera muttered, in wrath. "She thinks that the American has escaped; why should she think so? Bah! it is but the foolish fancy of a love-sick girl; the wish is father to the thought. Small chance of the Mustang escaping from a single-handed fight with the White Indians."

Then the thought of the rifle-shot, which had rung out so shrilly on the night-air, occurred to the Mexican. He pondered on it. The thought flashed across his brain that possibly the attack had not succeeded.

"First came the noise of the struggle, hand to hand, of course, as they sprung upon him from their ambush, and then the rifle-shot. I can not understand that. If they closed in upon him, how could he possibly use his rifle? Can the attack have failed?"

Bandera grew nervous at the thought.

"Suppose that the other American was near at hand? Caramba! It may be that my men have been beaten off. I can not bear this suspense. I'll see at once."

The Mexican set out for the scene of the recent conflict.

As he came near, he took the precaution to draw a pistol from his belt and raise the hammer.

Cautiously he proceeded onward.

The night was dark, and the faint light of the moon and stars afforded but little assistance.

Bandera at last stepped in upon the scene of the ambush.

By the faint light which came from the heavens he discovered a dark body lying motionless upon the ground.

"The American for a hundred ounces!" he muttered, in fierce joy, as he knelt down by the side of the body.

A careful glance, though, told him that it was the senseless form of Red Jose.

"He has been killed outright!" the Mexican muttered, in dismay.

A low groan coming from the shadow of a clump of bushes next attracted Bandera's attention.

Great was his astonishment and dismay when he discovered the leader of the White Indians, Michael Dago, stretched almost senseless upon the earth, weltering in a little pool of his own blood.

With his handkerchief Bandera endeavored to staunch the wound of the bandit.

"Heaven's curse upon this North American!" the Mexican cried, in despair; "he must have fought like a demon!"

Taking the sash from his waist, Bandera ran to the river and dipped it in the water; then he returned to the stricken bandit and bathed his brow with the moistened silk.

With a low groan the bandit chief opened his eyes; slowly, consciousness came back to him.

"Oh, Jesu save me!" he muttered, faintly. In the dark presence of the destroying angel the early teachings of the Mission priest came back to the mind of the crime-stained ruffian.

"You are badly hurt, Michael," Bandera said, with an anxious glance in the face of the helpless man.

"Yes, done for this world," Dago murmured, faintly.

"Oh, not so bad as that, I hope," the Mexican said, cheerily.

"My last stake is lost—the game's up. Santa Maria! how hot I am!"

The mind of the brigand was evidently wandering.

"I'll get you some water—wait a moment."

Again Bandera ran to the river; this time he filled the hollows of his hand with the limpid water and carried it to the parched lips of the outlaw.

Great drops of sweat were standing on the brow of the dying man.

"How were you hurt?" asked Bandera, anxious to learn the details of the American's escape, for escape he surely had.

"A spirit fresh from heaven," the outlaw murmured.

"A spirit?" Bandera cried, in surprise.

"Yes—she rose out of the earth. By the flash of the rifle I saw her face—" and Dago paused, gasping for breath.

Bandera could not guess the hidden meaning of Dago's words.

Carefully he bathed his brows and wiped away the damp dew of death which were gathering so thick and fast upon the forehead of the death-stricken ruffian.

"A spirit you say?"

"Yes, an angel from heaven sent—not to save this heretic—but to punish me," Dago said, speaking with difficulty.

"To punish you?" Bandera exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Yes—your turn will come next—" "My turn?"

"Yes."

"What did this spirit look like?" asked the Mexican, in wonder, perplexed by the strange words of the other, and almost convinced in his own mind that he was listening to the ravings of a maniac.

"Why she—you know—" muttered Dago, speaking with greater difficulty and his breath coming thick and fast.

"I do not understand you—" "That—girl—" "What girl?"

"The one we tied on the—on the back—" "Of the wild horse?" cried Bandera, in consternation.

"Yes—that one—" gasped the outlaw.

"And she appeared to you?"

"Her spirit—yes—shot me, here—I—your turn next—I—Santa—"

A single gasp and baffled Bandera was alone with the dead.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 102.)

For Duty's Sake.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"It must be so, Harry. Do not wound me by refusing to believe it."

It was a voice in which tears were quivering; a voice that was trying so hard to be brave and cheerful; a sweet, clear, high voice, perfect, as every thing about Daisy Hammond was perfect.

Just now, as she stood before Dr. Severn, looking up into his cold, stern face with her eyes, that were so blue, and so bright with their little oceans of unshed tears, she was very fair, very sweet to look upon; and, perhaps, Dr. Severn thought so, too, despite the cross curl of his proud lips, as he looked down first into her pure, true eyes, then at the dainty white hands, that nestled like two white doves, one on either of his shoulders.

Daisy was nearly a half-head shorter than he, and just now, when that delicate, flushed face was so nearly under his lips, Dr. Severn was strongly tempted to stoop and imprint warm, loving kisses on it.

But then those very same sweet lips had been uttering what was, to Dr. Severn, rank treason; foul disloyalty to him; to whom, of all the world, he insisted Daisy Hammond alone owed allegiance.

He was not at all a stubborn man; his mouth and chin were too exquisitely and finely out for that, although they were very full of haughty pride.

For a moment after she had spoken he looked her steadily in the eyes. Then he answered her, just a little sternly, just a little cavalierly.

"So you think, then, Daisy, that our engagement is to be a second consideration? I must confess, with myself it was foremost of all things."

She detected the sarcasm, and he knew it by the slight trembling of those little palms on his shoulder.

"Harry! you know I do not want to think that—because I do not think so. To me, nothing on earth would give so much pleasure as to go on as we have been going; but, Harry—and her eyes filled with tears, and her voice shivered a little, as though the words must be spoken, cost what they may—"Harry, duty is duty. And what account can we give, some day, if we do not perform it?"

Dr. Severn smiled strangely; Daisy could hardly tell whether he was laughing at her or reproving her.

"You are only romancing," he said, coolly, as he restlessly released himself from her clinging hands. "But of course you can suit yourself. If you choose to immolate yourself on the altar of sacrifice—why, I don't suppose I can dissuade you. I see I have little influence."

"Oh, Harry, how can you say so, when you know I would do every thing and all things to please you as well as I love you!"

And now the tears overflowed those tender, entreating eyes.

"Then give up this Quixotic notion of devoting yourself to your insane mother. An asylum will do as well—better—and I have told you I will be at all the expense. Only, Daisy, I could not have her for a member of my family after I am married."

His answer had come quick and decisive; then, when the words ceased, he smiled very lovingly down on the sorrowing-faced girl.

"We will be so very happy, little one, all alone at our new home. Won't we, Daisy?"

But his warm kisses, his close caress, were of no avail with her now. He had pointed out her path to her with the hand that placed the heavy circlet on her finger; with the mouth that had spoken words, once, that never had ceased till to-night, to waken blissful thrills.

Now Dr. Severn was trying to woo her away from her sacred duty. Dr. Severn would have her, and her alone; he had made no tiny chimney-corner anywhere in his great, grand house for Daisy's mother; her affected, afflicted mother, on whom God had laid his hand so sorely and heavily. And would Daisy go and queen it there at Severn Hill, and her mother be left to strangers' hands? Ah! and Daisy's heart grew sick and sad with the thought—that dear mother, who had given health and reason in exchange for her baby, Daisy.

No—a thousand, thousand times, no! Dr. Severn might break her heart—and a quick, sharp pang warned her how easy would be the task—but he could not wound her conscience. And she told him so, while the tears slowly rolled down her cheeks, and a cold numbness settled round her heart.

And Dr. Severn?

He bit his proud lip fiercely; then, half-disdainfully; then, finally, told Daisy he would give her time. He would not come again, but he would wait, and if ever Daisy bade him come and take her—herself, alone—he would come.

So that blissful idyl ended; and Daisy stepped out of the enchanted wayside into the sadder routine of every-day life and every-day work again.

Only, she knew she was crushed; she knew her joy was killed; but then, away down in her poor, sad heart, so low and softly she scarce heard it, some little comforting angelung her a jubilate—she was trying to do her duty.

And it did comfort her, with a blessed comfort that only those can appreciate who have experienced it.

Very quietly went the weeks on, and the months, until, one bright December morning, Daisy Hammond walked silently to her home, from a grave in the snowy cemetery, and remembered that it was four years since she had given Harry Severn up for her mother; and now her mother was gone where better care would be given than earth's love afforded.

Four years! and she could go by herself alone to Severn Hill, now—for had not Harry—she felt he was her's again, now—told her to bid him come and take her?

So she sat down to tell him her mother was asleep under the snow; she was content that it was so, for life had held no possible joy for her. Would he will that she should come to him? She was now his very own, as she always had been, and would be. She would not censure him for his course; perhaps no man would want his wife's insane mother wandering around his house; but now, how should it be?

Somehow her heart felt very calm and happy when she sent off the letter to the address she knew so well. Then she sat down and waited, full of the sweetest content; full of such undoubting faith, that she gathered together her most loved and most valued trifles to carry with her to Severn Hill.

Then, one morning, a week afterward, she received her answer.

"I see now I was not worthy of such a daughter as you have been. God forgive me, and help us both. Daisy, it is too late; I was married six months ago."

Now, when ten other years have made Daisy Hammond a woman of forty, she can hear to look back and think of it all. She is a very grave, silent woman, and people do not invade the dignity of her silence by questions, so she just goes on, as she ever went, in whatever way it is plainest to her that it is her duty to go.

Fairy Story.

The Wonderful Ball.

BY E. WILLETT.

IN THREE PARTS—PART III.

HARRY knew that he must keep moving, if he was to escape from his enemies, and he did his best; but he had a hard task, running with both hands occupied and a weight upon his back. The deformed boy, too, added to his troubles, by kicking and pinching him quite severely, at the same time calling him hard names, and bidding him go faster.

What an ungrateful little villain this is! thought Harry; but he did not utter his thought, having fully determined that he would not speak an angry word, whatever his feelings might be. So he fiddled and ran, as fast as he could, until he had left the barbarians far behind him, all dancing as if they were crazy.

Believing that he was safe from them, he dropped the fiddle, and would gladly have stopped to take breath; but the wretched little fellow on his back would allow him no rest.

Harry still pressed on, as fast as his weary legs would carry him, and, to his great dismay, soon found himself surrounded by a thicket of thorns and briars, which impeded his progress so that he could hardly move, and pricked and scratched him until he was ready to cry with pain and rage. The deformed boy took advantage of this opportunity to clasp his hands more tightly around Harry's neck, so as nearly to choke him, and did not omit to kick and pinch, to bite and abuse his two-legged horse, urging him to go faster, faster, faster, when Harry was so entangled that he could scarcely stir a step.

This was a severe trial for Harry's patience, especially as the thicket of briars grew up before him as fast as he forced his way through it, and it seemed impossible that he should ever find his way out of it. Scratched and torn, tired and nearly choked, with that little serpent clinging to him and aggravating him almost beyond endurance, it is no wonder that he felt angry and ready to drop his burden and give up his task. But he clenched his teeth tightly together,

so that not a word could pass his lips, drew his ball from his pocket, and struck it thrice against his nose.

It opened at the third tap, and three balls of fire hopped out—three little balls of fire, which, as they struck the ground, grew to three great flaming globes, which ran along before him, burning the thorns and briars as they went, and leaving a path through which Harry passed safely and easily.

Having nothing to trouble him now, except his weariness and the cross little wretch upon his back, he was congratulating himself on being able soon to reach the brook, when there rose before him the figure of an old woman, as tall as she was ugly, and as big as she was spiteful, and that is saying a great deal. Green fire darted from her eyes, and great tusks stuck out of her monstrous red mouth. She was armed with a long and stout stick, which she shook wrathfully at Harry as he approached.

"This," thought Harry, "must be the wicked old fairy, Spiretta, and she is going to kill me and eat me. What shall I do now?"

Instead of despairing, or running away in a fright, he had recourse to his ball, and out came a tiny pair of shears, with legs folded under them, which sprung out when it touched the ground. Legs and shears grew so rapidly, that the great, sharp blades were as high as the old woman's head, before she could raise her stick.

When she raised her stick, the shears did not try to avoid the blow, but darted forward, and snapped and cut the wood like an oat-straw. Another dart forward, and the old woman's head was seized between the sharp blades, which cut it off as easily as you would slice a cucumber.

Harry found himself no better off after this victory: for a great black cat took the place of the old woman, and the long-legged shears were nowhere to be seen. The cat was so very large, and so very black, that you might have thought that night had come on suddenly. It crouched on the ground like a panther, and lashed its great tail about, as if ready to spring, while fire darted from its eyes, and its white teeth shone savagely.

As Harry jumped back, he tapped his nose thrice with his wonderful ball, and there sprung out another black cat, so small that you could hardly have seen it. As it bounded through the air, it grew more rapidly than any thing that had yet come out of the ball, and, when it reached the cat on the ground, it was fully as large as its antagonist.

Then ensued an encounter, which Harry did not stay to witness. He left the two animals roaring and spitting, scratching and biting, rolling and tumbling together, and ran as fast as his legs could carry him, although the crosspatch on his back was choking him nearly to death, to the white bank

THE MANIAC'S DEFENSE.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

Mad? not a bit of it; perfectly sane;
Who thinks I'm mad is certainly blind;
How could I live in this palace and reign
Were I anyways out of my mind?
Are you not the great Mandarin of Hong Kong
Whom I met once, this side of the moon?
We are well met again; but, my friend, you are
wrong
When you think I am aught of a loon.

I chased the Egyptians over the plains,
And the tiger's cub bound by the heels,
For which I was the Sovereign of
cranes
And King of the tadpoles and eels.
In the shell of a clam the Atlantic I roost,
And, astride of a three-legged stool,
I galloped all over the world with Jack Frost,
And yet, you would think me a fool!

I am the man, sir, that strained at the gnat
And swallowed the camel, and then
Through the eye of a needle I went like a rat
Just to tickle the children of men.
I was once chosen lord of high Dutch when a lad
For proving (conclusively, too)
That the old fable of multiplication was bad,
And giving the wise men a new.

Not very long since Mt. Vesuvius was sick;
On a millions I sailed o'er the main,
And I put on the top of its crater a brick,
And then it got quiet again.

I returned o'er the sea by the cable, and found
That every thing here had gone wrong;
In spite of my orders the world had gone round,
And the moon's cheese was skipped and strong.

But I righted all things in less time than a snail
Could blow on a knot-hole a tune,
And stood on the fence with a rotten old rail
And knocked in the face of the moon.
And then, when I saw all the steeples in town
Go by, each astride of a broom,
With the tongues of their bells ringing, "Oh,
Buddy Brown!"

I laughed like jolly simoom!

I often have pastime in taking a ride
On a beautiful bubble of soap,
Or pass an hour swinging with pleasure and
pride
On a gossamer thread for a rope;
Or science I talk with a one-eyed hop-toad
Who says he's a cousin of mine,
While the grasshopper sits by the side of the
road
And plays on his banjo, Lang Syne.

Mad? Don't you see how I've parted my hair
In the middle, and also my name?
I've written ten trunks full of poetry rare,
And expect to live long as the same!
Lest my enemies should stab me with arsenic,
I'm wrapped

In a fudal post-office mail-coat.
Jing! I off of the roof of my mouth I once slip!
And nearly fell into my throat!

Once a man called me mad; with a carpenter's
saw
I cut off his head with great joy,
And sent him straight homeward to ask of his ma
What she thought of her delicate boy.
Well, good-by, my dear friend; I shall lend you
my prayers,
And let me bestow this advice:
If you ever should tumble up six pairs of stairs,
Take a lesson in minding your eyes.

The Two Counts.

A STORY OF SPAIN.

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

"Now, Inez La Vega, decide between us. Speaking for one, I have loved thee long, as well thou knowest. For Garcia, there, I can not speak. He says he loves thee, and if he lies, Jesu help him!"

While the Spanish spoke, his eyes were fastened upon a beautiful and regal-looking woman, who stood beneath the umbrageous boughs of a giant tree, whose shades fell upon the waves of the Guadalquivir.

Garcia Valgega, a handsome man, whose soldiery bearing attested honor and bravery, stood at her side.

It was evident that the speaker had suddenly come upon the twain at what might be a trying place, for confusion still marked the beauty's face, while that of Ferdinand was aflame with anger.

"Yes, decide betwixt us, Inez," said Garcia Valgega. "And be that decision what it may, I will honorably abide by it. Ferdinand, here, loves thee as do I. I have never craved thy dimpled hand, girl; but thou hast fathomed my heart. I know it; those eyes tell me so. Soon I march at the head of my retainers, to meet the invading French, and Ferdinand marches beneath the same banner, dost thou not?"

"Yes," answered La Vintresse, tartly.

"Girl, decide between us this night—this hour—this minute!"

It was a painful moment for Inez La Vega.

The noblest blood in Andalusia now stood before her, suitors for her hand. And she must choose one and reject the other—sending one to death upon the gory battlefield, and dying, curse her for his bloody end. Both were handsome—favorites at the famous court of Charles—and they had long wooed her, she felt, with noble intentions. But there was a coldness, a haughtiness, about La Vintresse which she did not like. To her he seemed a beautiful snow idol with the gorgeous glitter of ice, while his rival was warm-hearted, passionate, a true son of Spain, the victor on thirty acedamas.

For a long time she was silent. The rivals awaited with impatience the conclusion of the mental battle that raged in her mind.

At length her eyes lifted, and she spoke: "Swear!" she said, glancing from Valgega to La Vintresse, "that my decision shall be honored—that, after its rendition, you will still be friends."

Instantly two swords flashed from their ornamented scabbards, and in the mellow moonlight, the soldiers swore that the lady's decision should be duly honored.

A moment later she stretched forth her hand to Valgega.

"This hand, Garcia, is thine," she said, in her silvery voice, "as this heart long has been."

An exclamation of joy parted the count's lips, and he rained hot kisses upon Inez's cheeks.

A cloud, pregnant with the gloom of midnight, swept across La Vintresse's face, and something like an oath issued from his heart, as he turned his back upon the scene.

"Come, Garcia, let us return to the castle," whispered Inez. "Ferdinand's blood boils in his veins, and he will forget his oath."

"No," said the count. "He thinks our embrace too holy for him to witness—that is all, girl, Ferdinand!"

The mad count turned, as turns the adder upon the foot that tramples it.

Mingled hate and anger flashed from his eyes.

"Schemer!" he hissed, and his bright blade threw the Cynthian rays far out on the waves of the Guadalquivir.

Garcia's lips grew paler at the word that his rival shot at him.

"What mean you?" he demanded.

"I mean, sir, that you have poisoned the lady Inez's mind against your peer. Ere

this night she promised to be your bride. She's a deceiver, as false as hell and fallen angels!"

"Liar!" shouted Valgega, springing forward, and his hand almost drew blood from his rival's face.

"Satisfaction!" cried La Vintresse, from between clenched teeth.

"I willingly accord it at the sword's point," was the undaunted reply. "Name your ground and time."

"In yonder glade," cried La Vintresse, pointing to a spot about as light as noon-day. "Time, now!"

Inez tried to reconcile the mad rivals, but without avail.

"Go to the castle, girl," whispered her lover. "No better swordsman than Garcia Valgega dwells in Andalusia."

She knew that.

"Do not slay him, Garcia," she pleaded. "He's a brave soldier, and, at this juncture, the country can ill spare him."

"I promise thee, girl, that he shall live—hadst thou not pleaded for the villain, I should run him through. Farewell!"

He dismissed her with a kiss that drew an oath from La Vintresse, and she hurried to the castle, whose white walls glistened in the moonlight.

When he looked upon his rival, an attendant stood at his side, and the next moment he summoned his own esquire for the bushes, where he was waiting the conclusion of the love interview between the lovers.

The glade was soon reached, and the antagonists faced each other with drawn swords.

The word was given, the glittering blades met, and, by a dexterous maneuver, which was an apt illustration of Garcia's knowledge of fencing, La Vintresse's sword was knocked from his grip.

It fell at his antagonist's feet.

"Ferdinand, I could kill thee," said Valgega, picking up the fallen sword; "but, I disdain to shed La Vintresse's blood. It has too oft been poured for Spain on the field



THE TWO COUNTS.

of battle. Here, take thy sword; I spare thy life."

With a scowl La Vintresse took the weapon his rival extended, and drove it into the scabbard with a malediction.

"Come, Fernando," he said to his attendant. "Let us hence. I thank you not for sparing my life," he hissed at Valgega. "None but a coward strikes a disarmed man. We will meet again. You need not think that I thus tamely relinquish the hand of Inez La Vega."

Then he turned upon his heel, and he and his esquire hurried away.

A minute later, Garcia Valgega heard the galloping of their horses far down the stony river road.

He knew the revengeful nature of the man he had spared, and, at that moment, he upbraided himself for not cleaving the black heart that throbbed in the wicked depths of his breast. He feared not for himself, but for the woman he loved, against whom the revenge of La Vintresse would be directed.

In his castle the baffled count conceived many a dark plot against the lovers, and all save one he dismissed as impracticable.

He longed for the time when he might carry out that dark plot, and at length the fateful hour came.

The Spanish armies were on the eve of departing from the valley of the Guadalquivir, and the old castle of La Vega was ablaze with light.

Through the great chambers moved scores of masks, in the enticing mazes of Torpeschore, and in the dance, the carnage of the battlefield, the dead, the shrieks of the dying—all were forgotten.

"Will not the lady Inez walk to the banks of the Guadalquivir?" asked a mask, who stood by the beautiful girl's side, and pressed her white hand.

The speaker personated the character of Boabdil.

"What would the Moor with the lady Inez?" asked the beauty, gazing up into his disguised face.

"He would tell her a secret—regarding the man she loves."

"Ah!" ejaculated Inez, as she glanced at Valgega, who conversed with a tall, yellow domino. "I will walk with the Moor to the river. We must glide from his side, lest he seek us ere the secret is half told."

A minute later the twain left the castle, and soon stood upon the bank of the historic river, the pride and beauty of Andalusia.

The night was dark, and the hour near midnight. But few stars threw their shimmering light upon the waves, and the wind whistled mournfully through the dead leaves that strewed the beach.

"Now for the secret," said Inez.

"Haste! out with it, Sir Moor, for my heart will soon partake of the gloom that reigns supreme here."

A triumphant cackling broke from the domino's throat, and, as his face neared Inez's, the mask fell to the ground, and she beheld the dark eyes of Ferdinand La Vintresse glaring upon her.

A light shriek broke her colorless lips apart, and, starting back, she hissed the word, "Traitor!"

"What have I betrayed?" he asked.

"My country?"

"No—my confidence."

"Which is but a straw between me and the attainment of my vengeance," he retorted. "Girl, this night, in my castle, you become, willing or not, the bride of La Vintresse, and if Valgega seeks you, I'll toss him your body, with a knife sticking in your heart."

His mustached lip touched Inez's ear, while he hissed forth those terrible words, and while the last still quivered his lips, he raised her half-unconscious form in his arms, and bore her into a copse that kissed the water's edge.

There was tethered a somber steed, and into the rich saddle La Vintresse vaulted with his beautiful burden.

"I've outwitted you, Sir Garcia!" he hissed, as he darted away. "You never thought that my gold would admit me into the masquerade of La Vega's castle," and he laughed bitterly, but triumphantly, over his dastardly deed.

Once beyond the province of La Vega, he slackened his rapid gait to rest his steed, for the ride to his own castle, he knew, was not beset with dangers.

Now he left the river and rode through a dark defile, now he galloped down the valley, and struck the river again. The major portion of the road was stony, and the sound of his black steed's feet rung far away on the crisp autumn air.

The further he rode the more triumphant his cold heart grew, and all at once a song of victory burst from his throat—the first song of his that ever fell upon Inez's ears.

She listened to it with strange feelings, for the voice stamped the singer a prince among vocalists.

Ah! La Vintresse, the titled villain, knew not who waited for him in the dark defile he was about to enter. He never dreamed that, while he rode down the stony paths, a

horseman galloped from La Vega castle, by a shorter route, to intercept him among the mountains.

Like an equestrian statue, a coal-black horse, with a motionless rider, were dimly relieved against the gloomy sides of the pass; and all at once La Vintresse felt his bridle-rein gripped by a gauntleted hand, and his steed forced back upon his haunches.

"Scoundrel!" yelled La Vintresse, quickly recovering from the surprise, and the next instant he leveled a blow at the hand that gripped the reins.

Against the polished steel the sword snapped with a sharp report, and he threw the useless weapon at his enemy.

"Yield!" cried his antagonist.

"Never!" shouted La Vintresse, who recognized the voice of his foe—Garcia Valgega!

He drew a poniard from his bosom.

"Drop my reins," he cried, "or I'll hurl Inez La Vega, with a cleft heart, into your face!"

There was the determination of a desperate man—driven to the wall—in his tones, and, for a moment, Valgega was unmoved.

The life of Inez hung upon a thread. He saw the poniard elevated above her head, and well he knew the hand that held it.

"Let me pass!" cried Ferdinand.

"Never!"

The word bubbled to his lips, though he tried to keep it back.

"There!" rung out La Vintresse's voice: the poniard descended, and the white-robed girl was thrown forward!

She landed upon her lover's left arm, as the villain's steed, released, bounded forward.

A yell broke from Garcia's lips, as he received his stricken love, and the next instant his broadsword, keen as a razor, fell upon his rival's plume.

Not a groan followed the blow, and the black steed flew from the pass with a ghastly rider, whose cleft head lay upon each shoulder!

Garcia turned his attention to Inez.

She breathed. He examined the wound. Oh, fortune! the golden locket, containing his portrait, had turned aside the assassin's dirk, and the wound was not mortal.

Like the wind he rode for La Vega, and ere he marched to the field of battle, the beautiful Inez became his bride. It afterward turned out that he knew that the masked Boabdil was La Vintresse, whom he followed so soon as he discovered his lady's absence.

case of W—and his family, negroes and all, who had learned to look upon the scaly monsters with the utmost indifference, so much so, indeed, that the field hands were in the habit of bathing in the dangerous waters rather than walk the additional distance to the beach. Only two years previous one of the lads of the plantation had lost a foot by a vicious snap intended to take in the whole body, but the incident was soon forgotten and they went on as before.

The children—there were three of them, ranging from six to eleven years old—were permitted to go down to the dangerous locality, always in charge, it is true, of their nurse, a bright-faced quadroon, some sixteen or seventeen years of age, and who was devoted to her little charges with all that passionate warmth so peculiar to her kind.

I had often heard W—say that he believed the girl would face a hungry tiger in defense of the children, and while he believed it, he little thought how soon the test, or one even more fearful, would come.

It had been an unusually hot, sultry day, one of those where we breathe only with an absolute effort, and wearied with the apparent closeness of the house, though in reality the coolest place to be found, I seized my heavy rifle, eighteen to the pound, and strolled off toward the lagoon to vent my discontent on the alligators.

I knew they would be out in full force—they always were on such a day—and before I had gone half the distance, I heard a low, muttering thunder of an old bull, who was probably seeking a combat with some equally willing rival.

As I expected, plenty of game was in sight, and getting a good rest for my rifle in the forks of a sapling, I opened the sport by a center-shot that knocked over an old veteran in first-rate style.

Changing position frequently, I continued firing until my piece had become too dirty for accuracy, when I removed the barrel and proceeded to give her a good cleansing.

The greater part of the afternoon had been spent in my target practice, and the cool breeze from seaward was just wafting inland through the forest.

Once or twice, while intent upon the work upon which I was engaged, I fancied that I had heard the sound of the children's voices further down the lagoon; but, knowing they were in charge, I paid no further attention to the matter.

I had washed and dried the barrel of my piece, and was in the act of replacing it upon its stock, when another, and totally different sound from those I had previously heard, caused me to spring from the log upon which I was sitting with a feeling almost of certainty that something fearful was transpiring down where the little ones were at play.

It was the shrill, agonized scream of a woman, as though in deadly peril, or else witnessing some horrible scene.

Quick as lightning the thought of where these children were, and then swift follow-

Recollections of the South.

A "Risky" Shot.

BY RALPH KINGWOOD.

THE winter of 1859 found me enjoying the hospitality of my old frontier comrade and friend, W—, who, with an eye to the beautiful as well as comfortable, to say nothing in regard to pecuniary considerations, had located his homestead amid that lovely region lying round about Tamp Bay on the west coast of Florida.

The house was situated some half-mile, or more, back from the beach upon the summit of a gentle rise, and completely embowered in a grove of grand old live oaks and flowering magnolias.

The only possible objection that could have been urged against his choice of location, was the existence of a large lagoon lying off to the eastward of the house, but not so far away but one standing on the southern or front piazza could see the shimmer of water through rifts in the dense foliage that grew on the lower level land.

It was said by many that during the almost tropical heat of summer this body of still water must necessarily breed more or less of malaria, and the assertion was true, but even this, in my opinion, was to be looked upon as a secondary danger.

The lagoon, the waters of which were unusually deep, was literally alive with alligators, some of which had attained to enormous size, by far the largest I had ever seen, save, perhaps, those that lurk amid the seedy marshes of and above the delta of the Mississippi.

It soon came to be with me a favorite sport to secure a good position on the banks of the lagoon and make targets of these fellows' eyes, a very difficult one to hit "plum center."

The old saw, that "familiarity breeds contempt," was thoroughly verified in the

ing came the recollection of the fierce creatures upon whom I had been waging war the afternoon.

Scream followed scream in rapid succession, each sounding clearer as I drew near the spot, for by this time I was running as I never ran before, feeling the powder into the barrel of my rifle, and then dropping in the heavy, conical ball without patch, shoved it down, throwing the rod away.

This was an old trick, learned in many a "tight place" on the western plains, and it was done instinctively rather than with any fixed purpose, or idea that it would be immediately required.

Of a sudden the cries ceased, when I had traversed, perhaps, two-thirds of the way, but the deathlike silence that followed was even more terrible than the shrieks had been.

Another moment and I had burst through the chaparral, that thickly lined the borders of the lagoon, and then the cause of this startling alarm was revealed in all its hideousness.

Two of the children, the eldest and youngest, both boys, were standing on the bank, a few paces back from the water whither they had fled, gazing, with blank terror written upon their young faces, out upon the lagoon, where, at a distance of ten or fifteen feet, a fearful scene was being enacted.

It required but a single glance to see that my first fear on hearing the scream was only too near the mark.

At the distance above named, I beheld a huge alligator, one of the very largest and scariest of his kind, in whose immense jaws was held, evidently by the dress only, for she struggled violently, the second child, a sweet little girl of eight or nine years, while clinging with the strength of despair, to her charge's arms and shoulder, was the quadroon nurse, who, at this moment, again made the forest ring with her shrieks.

Hastily dropping my rifle, I felt for my hunting-knife, which, to my dismay, I found was not in its sheath. I had used it in taking my rifle apart, and it was then sticking in the log upon which I had sat.

The emergency was a desperate one.

I saw that there was not a moment to lose, for the great beast was getting furious, as I saw by the way he was beginning to lash the water, at being thus deprived of his prey, beside which the disturbance was fast bringing others to the spot. I could see their black, knotty heads protruding from the water here and there, all concentrating toward the place where the contest was going on.

Further, I saw that the alligator that held the child's clothing in its grasp would soon let go his hold, and, by a sudden attack, secure a better and far more deadly one. This fact alone was sufficiently appalling, and showed me that desperate measures must be resorted to.

The brave girl clung to her charge, striving desperately to tear the clothes away, but they were new and strong, and would not give. She seemed not to see, or if so, she cared not for the other monsters that were bearing down upon her.

My readers will remember that what I have taken so long to write, passed through my mind and before my eyes in a single instant; indeed the time consumed was only enough to permit of my snatching up the rifle, drawing back the hammer, and bringing the piece to my face.

I knew that I must fire from where I stood. Any advance into the water would have instantly brought on the catastrophe, for I fancied the beast had become more savage even at the sight of me upon the bank.

Shouting to the girl to pull steadily upon the child for a moment, and stoop as low in the water as possible, I braced myself firmly for the desperate risk.

With wonderful coolness she obeyed, and as she crouched down into the water, I saw, with a thrill of delight, that the brute's head, a full side view, was completely exposed.

The steady pull upon the victim had the desired effect, and for one brief instant the monster lay perfectly quiet, his usually dull, leaden eye, now fairly ablaze with anger, offering a perfect target.

That single moment was enough.

With a muttered prayer, I glanced through the sights, pressed the hair trigger, and the heavy ball sped true to the mark.

A horrid roar—the monster loosed his hold, and throwing half his length upward, out of the water, fell back, and began lashing the calm waters of the lagoon into a perfect tempest of foam.

Before the smoke had drifted a foot, I was into the water, and a moment later, had dragged nurse and child safely to land.

Until all was over I knew not how intense the strain had been upon my nerves. Weak, almost sick, I threw myself down upon the ground, nor was it until several minutes had passed could I find strength to examine into matters.

Neither were hurt in the least, though the great rents in the little one's garments told how close the deadly teeth had grazed the delicate limbs.

It seems that the child had slipped away from the nurse, and went down to the water's edge to pluck a flower. The beast was lying in wait, to all appearances a rotten, sodden drift-log lying upon the sands, and quick as thought made his rush, with what result we have seen.

It was a narrow escape, at least so W—considered it, and you may be sure, the little one played no more by the lagoon.

Just Reward of Treachery.—Tarpeia, the daughter of Tarpeius, the keeper of the Roman capital, agreed to betray it into the hands of the Sabines, and in return, she was to receive a reward, that "That she should have for her reward, that which they carried upon their left arms," meaning the golden bracelets they wore upon them. The Sabines having been let in by Tarpeia, according to compact, Titus, their king, though well pleased with carrying the place, yet detesting the manner in which it was done, commanded the Sabines to give the fair traitor her promised reward, by throwing to her all they wore on their left arms; and therewith unclasping his bracelet from his left arm, he cast that, together with his shield, upon her. All the Sabines following the example of their chief, the traitress was speedily overwhelmed with the number of bracelets and bucklers heaped upon her, and thus perished miserably under the weight of the reward which she had earned by the double treachery to her father and to her country.

Short Stories from History.